

For Immediate Release

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ATLANTA - Georgians living in rural Burke and Screven counties directly across from the Savannah River Site, a US nuclear weapons plant are demanding answers from the Department of Energy (DOE) about the safety of their water, air and crops.

Known by local residents as 'the bomb plant', SRS currently tasked with waste management, waste clean-up after reprocessing, plutonium disposition, and tritium production for nuclear weapons. It is a national superfund site, and has a legacy of contamination spanning back to the Cold War, which is why environmental monitoring was originally implemented there.

Georgia WAND and local citizens have been working with DOE and the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to restore environmental testing to these areas that have gone without for the past nine years.

"My people perish from a lack of knowledge," Annie Laura Stephens, a resident of Burke County who lives near SRS said.

Recent reports of tritium in the ground water under Georgia's Plant Hatch and growing concerns about nuclear contaminants after Fukushima have Georgia residents living near the Savannah River Site have raised even deeper concerns, not only from the community, but also from experts.

"As a physician, I am appalled at the disregard for the health of those that live in the area near SRS, especially in regards to tritium. It is mutagenic, carcinogenic and multi-generational," Dr. Helen Caldicott, renowned pediatrician, nuclear expert, and a co-founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility, said.

This monitoring would restore sampling, testing and reporting of all radioactive contaminants in soil, crops, air, livestock, and water. However, DOE has obstructed this funding for this program, which would have needed to be approved by Friday, September 30, 2011.

"Too many promises have been broken," Bobbie Paul, Executive Director, Georgia WAND said. "It's time to stand up for what is right. It's to get some answers."

This State monitoring program was cut in 2003, after ten years of intact testing, put in place as a result of an Agreement in Principle between the State (EPD) and federal (DOE) agencies. A national superfund site, SRS has a legacy of contamination spanning back to the cold war, which is why this monitoring was initially established. This testing helped protect residents in poor and rural areas surrounding SRS, where many people rely on water from private wells, home-grown crops and fish from the Savannah River. In 2010, then DOE Assistant Secretary, Dr. Ines Triay pledged to that monitoring would be restored Georgia. DOE has yet to fulfill their promise. Georgia WAND sees this as another instance of negligence by the federal government.

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