



November 21, 2016

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT

Carl Spreng
State Project Manager for Rocky Flats
Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment
carl.spreng@state.co.us

Re: Residents Living Downwind of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Plant

Dear Mr. Spreng:

Thank you for attending the Rocky Flats Downwinders Health Survey Preliminary Findings Community Meeting on November 18, 2016. As you were informed at the meeting, and has now been reported on Channels 4, 7, 9 and 31 and in the Denver Post, Boulder Daily Camera, and Westword, the preliminary findings reflect an abnormally high level of thyroid cancer and "rare cancers" (those normally only affecting less than 15 of 100,000 people per year).

At the meeting, you admitted that no prior community health survey has ever been performed in which community members were directly asked about illnesses which may have been caused by Rocky Flats contamination. However, you commented that a Report to the Health Advisory Panel on Rocky Flats was prepared in 1998 by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (the "Public Health Department") which utilized Colorado Central Cancer Registry information to determine that no higher rate of cancer was detected in residents living downwind of Rocky Flats versus the general population (the "1998 Report").

Unfortunately, as pointed out in the meeting by Professor Carol Jensen, the 1998 Report did not include a study of thyroid cancer. This omission is shocking in that thyroid cancer is one of the most common cancers caused by ionizing radiation exposure and it is abnormal levels of thyroid cancer which have been detected in the preliminary results of the Rocky Flats Downwinders Health Survey. The National Cancer Institute reports on its website under cancer causes, radiation and nuclear accidents that radioactive isotopes "accumulate in the thyroid gland, an organ in the neck" and "exposure to radioactive iodine may increase the risk of thyroid cancer many years later, especially for children and adolescents." Furthermore, "Radiation exposure of the thyroid at a young age is a recognized risk factor for the development of differentiated



thyroid cancer lasting for four decades and probably for a lifetime after exposure.” (Sinnott B, Ron E, Schneider A B, Exposing the Thyroid to Radiation: A Review of its Current Extent, Risks and Implications, Endocrine Reviews, 2010; 31(5), 756-773).

Consequently, Rocky Flats Downwinders, and the thousands of concerned citizens of which it represents, demand that the Public Health Department immediately undertake a comprehensive study of the Colorado Central Cancer Registry from 1980 (the approximate date the entire metro area began to be counted within the registry) to date to determine whether a higher rate of thyroid cancer exists in residents living downwind of Rocky Flats versus the general population. In addition, since the incidence of “rare cancers” was also not studied within the 1998 Report, but abnormally high rates of “rare cancers” have been detected in the preliminary findings of the Rocky Flats Downwinders Health Survey, it is also demanded that the Public Health Department include an examination of such “rare cancers” in its new study.

It is not lost on us that the 1998 Report is now over 18 years old and has not been updated even though it is known that cancer caused from radiation exposure can take decades to appear. Any conclusions drawn from the study detailed in the 1998 Report are also questionable given that the use of the Cancer Registry relies on zip codes and thus by definition does not include anyone who moves before being diagnosed with cancer. Given that the United States Census Bureau reports that the average American moves 11.4 times in their lifetime, the average Rocky Flats resident is likely to have moved away before any cancer possibly caused by Rocky Flats manifests itself decades later.

The time is now for the state of Colorado to use its resources to assist Rocky Flats Downwinders with outreach to residents (wherever they currently live) to have them complete the health survey and to fund a controlled study regarding the health of residents living next to the plant during its operation compared to the general population. Until and unless it does so, Colorado is failing to protect its residents. If Coloradoans have been negatively affected by radiation exposure, lifesaving health monitoring programs and compensation arrangements under the Radiation Exposure and Compensation Act (“RECA”) should be made available to them just like they are to citizens of other states negatively affected by radiation exposure.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicholas P. Hansen", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Nicholas P. Hansen, Esq.

Co-Founder Rocky Flats Downwinders

nick@hansenlawfirm.com