



BEYOND NUCLEAR BACKGROUNDER TMI TRUTH

The Radiation Meters Went Off Scale

March 6, 2014

On August 6, 1945, the crew aboard the Enola Gay, which had just dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, recounted experiencing a “metallic taste.” Captain Paul Tibbets reported “It tasted like lead.” The Japanese citizens in the city below who were still alive reported a “sweet metallic taste.” The biological experience of the people in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki taught us that the symptoms of acute radiation exposure include nausea and vomiting, severe fatigue, diarrhea, hair loss and graying and a radiation-induced abnormal reddening of the skin medically known as erythema.

In the days following the March 28, 1979 TMI meltdown, hundreds of local residents reported these same experiences and symptoms. Within hours of the beginning of the nuclear disaster, onsite radiation monitors went off scale because radiation levels exceeded the instruments’ measurement capacity.

The offsite radiation monitor equipment around TMI that could have verified radiation exposures to downwind populations consisted of twenty pole mounted Thermo-Luminescent-Dosimeters (TLD) maintained by Met Ed on a 15-mile perimeter.

The State of Pennsylvania had set up only a few TLDs immediately next to the Met Ed meters.

Although more TLDs were deployed on March 30th, large open windows still existed between monitoring stations where a narrow radioactive plume could pass without detection.

In the aftermath, citizen-based surveys of people’s experiences produced many similar stories that reveal that radiation releases had immediate adverse health consequences.

Aileen Mioko Smith and Katigari Mitsuru visited the TMI communities along with several Japanese researchers in the summer of 1979 to document the accident’s radiological biological impact. Aileen Mioko Smith was already known for her role in disclosing the tragic human consequences of industrial methyl mercury poisoning in Minamata, Japan. Local residents Marjorie and John Aamodt, who would voluntarily evacuate the area

during the accident, returned to conduct a TMI-area household survey. Their findings, similar to Smith's, identified the deliberate and uncontrolled releases of radioactivity from the TMI accident.

Marie Holowka, a dairy farmer near TMI, was in the milk house, at 4:30 AM, March 28, when she felt what she thought was an earthquake and heard a loud rumbling. She wondered if something had gone wrong at TMI but kept milking. When she set off at 7 AM to go back to the house she said, "It was so blue, I couldn't see ten feet ahead of myself." She walked about twenty feet and fell down, had difficulty getting up and fell down again. "I had no strength to get up." There was a "copper taste" in the air, like a penny in her mouth. Marie was later treated for thyroid problems.

Many residents reported the same "burning and metallic taste," "a tingling just like needles" in legs and arms, difficulty breathing, itchy rashes of tiny blisters, the bright reddening of the skin like "sunburn" on faces, necks, arms and legs, the graying and whitening of hair and eyebrows, significant hair loss, and a feeling of being "half sick."

Robert Weber, a Mechanicsburg veterinarian, reported a significant increase in birthing problems including a 10% increase in stillbirths, marked increase in the need for Cesarean Sections, among sheep, goats and pigs in 1979, 1980, and 1981 in a 15-mile area around the reactor site. Dr. Weber reported that the cancer rate among animals with shorter life spans (dogs, cats, etc.) increased significantly.

Keith Malcodi, a dentist in Lewisberry, PA, had Kodak x-ray film that was damaged (stripped and fogged) during the accident. If the film's lead packaging was sealed the film was fine, but if the packaging was open, it was ruined.

The official line remains that the maximum radiation releases reported by Metropolitan Edison were orders of magnitude less than a dose required to produce physiological symptoms, domestic and wild animal deaths and the documented destruction of plant life. Industry champions still say there was never a significant release of radioactivity from the TMI accident and that the people's experiences could only have been caused by stress. They dismiss those who insist otherwise as having "radio-phobia". However, the absence of the monitoring equipment and a paucity of evidence neither support such claims but serve rather as a convenient excuse to dismiss people's legitimate experiences.

The people of Three Mile Island know otherwise because they were the radiation meters.

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