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TECH

First U.S. Drinking Water Samples Show Radiation from Japan: Boise, Richland Wa.

Apr. 5 2011 - 1:22 am | 6,994 views | 0 recommendations | 3 comments

Drinking water in Boise and Richland, Washington was found to contain extremely small amounts of radioactive isotopes from Japan's nuclear disaster, the Environmental Protection Agency announced Monday night.

The tests were the first tests of U.S. drinking water by the EPA's RadNet system since the Fukushima nuclear accident.

"Drinking water samples from two locations, Boise, Idaho and Richland, Washington, showed trace amounts of Iodine-131 – about 0.2 picocuries per liter in each case," according to the [EPA press release](#).

"An infant would have to drink almost 7,000 liters of this water to receive a radiation dose equivalent to a day's worth of the natural background radiation exposure we experience continuously from natural sources of radioactivity in our environment."



Photo by Greg Riegler Photography via flickr

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Simulation Entrapment: A New Player in Divorce and Custody Cases

by TODD ESSIG

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Since radiation from Fukushima began appearing in the U.S., government agencies have stressed that the low levels of radiation pose no risk to the population here, and leading scientists, health experts, and cancer-fighting organizations like [The Endocrine Society \(pdf\)](#) have likewise tried to calm fears. But Physicians for Social Responsibility recently [issued a statement](#) asserting “there is no safe level of radionuclide exposure, whether from food, water or other sources. Period.”

The results come just two days after radioactive isotopes were found in rainwater samples from [Boise and two other locations](#). A sample from Washington state showed no detectable radiation in those tests.

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9:13 am on 04/05/11



bobshanbrom

First, great to see you back in the saddle, many months since your trueslant column. Second, it seems the nation is bipolar on this radiation issue. Well, at least I know I am bipolar on it. The amounts being reported are very low, as you say. In our neck of the woods, CA, milk is reported to have 1/5000th federal level of cesium-131. When the PSR says there are no safe levels of radionuclotides, that strikes me as misleading because there is a natural amount of radioactive atoms all around. If the added levels of radioactive atoms is like adding a grain of sugar to a cup of tea with two teaspoons of sugar in it already, they should say that. Meanwhile, we are “aging” our milk 8 days to get rid of about half the radioactive cesium and cutting the kids’ consumption to one glass a day.

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ABOUT ME

If humans can be counted upon to deplete shared resources, as the “Tragedy of the Commons” holds, we can also be counted upon to mine tragedy for opportunity. This page will pursue innovators who create a cleaner engine of human activity.

I began covering the relationship between humans and our natural environment in 1985, when I discovered my college was discarding radioactive waste in the dumpster out back. That story ran in the Arizona Republic, and I have worked the energy-and-environment beat ever since—for dailies in Arizona and California, for alternative weeklies including New Times and Newcity, for online innovators such as True/Slant, Forecast Earth, and The New York Times Company’s LifeWire syndicate.

I’ve wandered far afield—to cover the counterrevolutionary war in Nicaragua, the World Series Earthquake in San Francisco, the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. For the last several years I have also been teaching journalism and other varieties of non-fiction at the University of Chicago.

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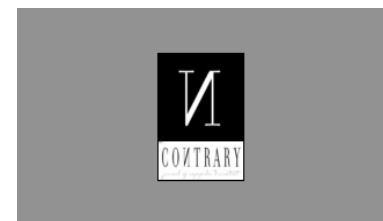
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WHAT I'M UP TO

editing **Contrary Magazine**



9:52 am on 04/05/11



JEFF MCMAHON
The Ingenuity of the Commons

Thank you, Bob. It's great to see you here as well. You bring up a crucial point: Most scientists, government officials, health experts are coming at the issue from a relative point of view, comparing the new exposures from Japan to everyday exposures. The doctors at PSR come from an absolute point of view: no new exposure is good exposure. Which perspective is correct? Which gamma ray will be the one that causes just the right kind of cell damage to create cancer?

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10:39 am on 04/05/11



bobshambrom

There's a theory out there, hormesis, espoused by no less than the lady in leather Ann Coulter, but viable nonetheless, that as long as the damaged DNA has enough undamaged DNA nearby that the DNA will replicate itself correctly. Kinda like being in a good blog, I guess. Bob Parks, a scientist at Univ. of Md, also accepts this notion as plausible. He believes there is a threshold dose. Below this level there is little statistical evidence of any illness according to him, citing evidence from Chernobyl.

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