

FALLOUT

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FALLOUT

EPA Plans to Reduce Cleanup of Nuclear Fallout Now

"No rest for the wicked!" Says EPA Employee With a Smile

by Michael Kane

(Special to CollapseNet)

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[Long time readers will remember Michael Kane from his years of writing for [From The Wilderness](#) where he proved himself a fearless investigative journalist. Michael also contributed a chapter to my book "[Crossing the Rubicon: The Decline of the American Empire at the End of the Age of Oil](#). It's nice to see him in the field again. – MCR]

March 24, 2011, 12:30 EDT, NEW YORK CITY— In the wake of the continuing nuclear tragedy in Japan, the United States government is still moving quickly to increase the amounts of radiation the population can "safely" absorb by raising the safe zone for exposure to levels designed to protect the government and nuclear industry more than human life. It's all about cutting costs now as the infinite-growth paradigm sputters and moves towards extinction. As has been demonstrated by government conduct in the Gulf of Mexico in the wake of Deepwater Horizon and in Japan, life has taken a back seat to cost-cutting and public relations posturing.

The game plan now appears to be to protect government and the nuclear industry from "excessive costs"... at any cost.

PAGs

Protective Action Guides, or PAGs as they are called by the Environmental Protection Agency (**EPA**), are used to enforce the law following any incident involving the release of radioactive material. If there were a dirty bomb attack in America or nuclear meltdown, how would the EPA interpret the Clean Water Act? How would it interpret a whole suite of laws that impact upon our food, water and soil? As with the incredibly toxic pollution which has claimed many lives of 9-11 responders, the sole decision about what is safe is an administrative EPA process shielded from public scrutiny.

In 1992, the EPA produced a PAGs manual that answers many of these questions. But now an update to the 1992 manual is being planned, and if the "Dr. Strangelove" wing of the EPA has its way, here is what it means (brace yourself for these ludicrous increases):

- A nearly 1000-fold increase for exposure to strontium-90;
- A 3000 to 100,000-fold hike for exposure to iodine-131; and
- An almost 25,000 rise for exposure to radioactive nickel-63.ⁱ

The new radiation guidelines would also allow long-term cleanup thresholds thousands of times more lax than anything EPA has ever judged safe in the past. Under long-established EPA policy, in conformity with long-accepted international standards on "acceptable" amounts of radiation these proposed changes would increase the permissible amounts of radiation to levels where 25% of those exposed to these "new acceptable levels" would develop cancer based on the EPA's own numbers.ⁱⁱ

And the scariest part is that once the EPA publishes the changes in the Federal Register, it is a done deal. EPA deliberations are not discussed in public or debated in Congress. There is only a public comment period *after* the new PAGs are published. But it could be said that the EPA is notorious for ignoring what the public has to say during such comment periods.

These insane changes are nothing new. In the final days of the Bush Administration, the "Dr. Strangelove" wing of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was preparing to dramatically increase permissible radioactive releases in drinking water, food and soil after "radiological incidents."

Radiological incidents include both reactor incidents at power plants and dirty bomb attacks.

This psychotic move was stopped in the eleventh hour in 2009 by a group called Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) who submitted two Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. When the EPA was not forthcoming with all of the documentation, PEER sued obtaining the desired docs and winning \$12,000 in lawyer fees. They thought that was the end of it.ⁱⁱⁱ

THE INSANITY IS BACK!!!

Right now there is another push within the EPA to resurrect this agenda. Many mid and upper-level managers currently at EPA were working for the agency under Bush and are, in fact Bush-Cheney era appointees.

One such person is Sara DeCair, a health physicist with the EPA's Office of Radiation and Indoor Air since 2003. She is currently one of those rewriting the standards.

In an internal EPA email that was obtained by PEER, DeCair explains that the Head Administrator of the EPA, [Lisa P. Jackson](#), had given the green light to go forward with these changes sometime in the beginning of May, 2010. In that email, which was time-stamped 05/06/2010 04:35 PM EDT, DeCair ominously wrote the following:

"We have noticed that she (Lisa P. Jackson) does not like any delay between deciding a thing and moving forward. *No rest for the wicked, I like to say! Thank you .;*" (emphasis added)^{iv} (see below)

Notice how Sara DeCair closes the email with a smiley face. Why didn't she just go ahead and throw in a [LOL](#) or [LMFAO](#)? No rest for the wicked, indeed.

Not all in EPA agreed to the Draconian changes. There is an internal battle being fought, but it appears – based on the email obtained by PEER which is published at the end of this report – that the battle may have already been won since Lisa P. Jackson has seemingly given the green light.

Jackson is the Head Administrator of EPA. The final decision rests with her and President Obama. While it seems she may have already been swayed by the Dr. Strangelove wing of her agency, she needs to be swayed back down to reality on planet earth with the rest of us.

Here is Jackson's email address: jackson.lisap@epa.gov

Email Lisa P. Jackson and tell her you are outraged that she seems to have given the green light to this horrific EPA plan. Demand that she stops the process and fires Sara DeCair for putting a smiley face on serving the corporate interest over the public interest.

Email or call Sara DeCair here: decair.sara@epa.gov (202) 343-9713

Let DeCair know her words are being read and examined, and that you've emailed the Head Administrator of the EPA (Jackson), demanding DeCair be fired. Until these people know we are holding them accountable, they will hide in the shadows where they are most dangerous.

Reading the above-mentioned EPA email (provided at the end of this report) makes it clear that the agency has very little interest in protecting the environment but is consumed with its "communication strategy" to the power-players involved, most notably the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). They even state that DHS needs to be met with first "so that the DHS is not surprised when we begin the Interagency discussions."

[Or maybe so that DHS can keep their personnel out of areas labeled safe for useless eaters. – MCR]

Act of Congress or Enforcement?

As I learned about this, my first question was, "Wait a minute. Isn't this all about legislation? Wouldn't such a change require an act of Congress?"

NO! This is all about enforcement, and enforcement rests with the executive branch, which in this case is the EPA. It is the EPA who decides in advance how laws will be enforced by the rest of government.

And these decisions are hammered out in backroom deals so concealed from the public that members of the EPA itself feel comfortable giving their work the tagline of "*no rest for the wicked*" with a smiley face in communications where they are attempting to fast-track a process that would jeopardize millions of lives and risk further injury to our obviously unstable environment.

Federal Register

Published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents.^v

The EPA will be publishing their update of PAGs in the Federal Register once clearance has been given by the EPA's Head Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, and, of course, by President Obama. Once that happens, it is effectively game-over. So stopping the new PAGs before they make it to the Federal Register is imperative.

How much time is there to stop it? That's hard to say because it is not a public process. The only time we get a glimpse as to the rollout plans of the EPA is when groups like PEER are successful with FOIA requests for internal documents.

According to Jeff Ruch, the Executive Director of PEER (www.peer.org), his organization currently has yet another FOIA request in process that should result in the disclosure of all of the EPA's documents in this regard. Originally the request was put in while the documents were still in draft form, so a follow-up was required. Ruch anticipates that all documentation will be provided in fairly short time.

PEER's plan is to air those documents in full daylight and let them speak for themselves. Ruch feels confident that – in light of the crisis in Japan – the EPA will have no choice but to back off of this redrafting of PAGs (for the time being).

Bridge The Gap

The overwhelming majority of the above information was provided to [CollapseNet](#) by Jeff Ruch and PEER. Ruch got us in touch with Dan Hirsch, who is President of [The Committee to Bridge the Gap](#). Ruch told CollapseNet that Hirsch and his organization were the main players opposing the EPA's changing of PAGs.

In a phone interview with Hirsch, CollapseNet asked what he and those he worked with were planning to do to stop the EPA from making these life-threatening changes.

Hirsch indicated that he had planned to write to the Assistant Administrator of the EPA expressing concern that the PAGs had not been addressed properly and request another face-to-face meeting. Hirsch informed me he and his colleagues had met with EPA a year and a half ago in regards to their attempt to change the PAGs back at that time. Remember, this process began at the end of the Bush administration and has only recently resurfaced.

Japan

It took only a few minutes for Hirsch to state that all his PAGs work has been put on hold by the unfolding events in Japan. He has been consumed with trying to get the American government to deploy appropriate radiation monitors – which they do have, somewhere – into California to detect radioactive iodide from radioactive plumes possibly coming from Japan. No such deployment has occurred.

Hirsch said there were 12 monitors deployed in California and that only 5 of them are operational. None of them are capable of detecting radioactive iodide. Under standard operating procedures the samples would be sent to Georgia for processing and the results should be available 5 days later. But by that time the radioactive plume would no longer be in California so the data would be completely useless in helping to protect humans from being exposed to radiation.

The government does have monitors that can detect radioactive iodide instantly, but they have not been deployed in California as of this writing. CollapseNet told Hirsch that, based on what he was saying, it seemed like the federal government had no intent to detect radioactive iodide in time to prevent exposure.

"It certainly gives that impression," responded Hirsch.

Worst Fears

It seems that the Strangelove-wing of the EPA is working so hard to change the PAGs it is as if the powerful are anticipating radiological disasters in America as inevitable. Anything is possible, and everything is conceivable in the continuing collapse of human industrial civilization.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Interview with Jeff Ruch, Executive Director of PEER (www.peer.org), on March 17, 2011 at 4:45pm EST

See also <http://www.tennessean.com/article/20110316/NEWS08/110316027/1969/NEWS/Group-warns-EPA-ready-increase-radioactive-release-guidelines-?odyssey=nav|head>

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} The email originating with Sara DeCair was sent to me via pdf attachment from Jeff Ruch on March 17, 2011, and has been published along with this report. (see below)

^v <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/>

Nate
McMichael/DC/USEPA/US
05/10/2010 07:10 AM

To: Jessica Wieder
cc
bcc
Subject: Re: Wow - timing was amazing

Quite an interesting development!

Let's discuss this when you have a few minutes this morning. I want to make sure that I have a good grasp of the process in case someone disappears for six months.

Nate McMichael
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Radiation Protection Division
Center for Radiation Information and Outreach
Office: (202) 343-9265
Cell: (202) 236-4176

Jessica Wieder - Sara - I will have a draft of the comm path list for... 05/06/2010 04:46:33 PM

From: Jessica Wieder/DC/USEPA/US
To: Sara DeCair/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Darrell Liles/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, "Nate McMichael"
<nate.mcmichael@epa.gov>
Date: 05/06/2010 04:46 PM
Subject: Re: Wow - timing was amazing

Sara - I will have a draft of the comm path list for you tomorrow to look at before you go.

Like I say - when it rains, it pours.

Darrell - both nate and I can help with the FR

Jess

Sara DeCair

----- Original Message -----

From: Sara DeCair
Sent: 05/06/2010 04:35 PM EDT
To: Jessica Wieder; Darrell Liles
Subject: Wow - timing was amazing

Mike Flynn got back from chatting with us and had a voice mail from Gina saying that she talked to the Administrator about going forward on the PAGs, and Lisa said to go for it! We guessed she would say that. We now have the green light to start talking with the other Departments/Agencies about our new path forward, but first we need our path listed out -- so still, next week will be the time to wrap up a checklist and an edited FR Notice. Lee and then Alan can be your reviewers and can give you a better feel for timing, probably depending on when Mike will next see Gina. We have noticed she doesn't like any delay between deciding a thing and moving forward. No rest for the wicked, I like to say!

Thank you :)

perrin.alan@epa.gov

----- Forwarded by Alan Perrin/DC/USEPA/US on 06/07/2010 05:38 PM -----

From: Mike Flynn/DC/USEPA/US
 To: Dana Tulis/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, James Woolford/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Barnes Johnson/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Cynthia Dougherty/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Pamela Barr/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Richard Ossias/DC/USEPA/US@EPA
 Cc: betsy southerland, sue stahle, Jonathan Edwards/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Alan Perrin/DC/USEPA/US@EPA, Lee Veal/DC/USEPA/US@EPA
 Date: 06/04/2010 03:42 PM
 Subject: PAGs Manual - Next Steps

Colleagues,

As we begin staff level discussions on advancing the EPA Protective Action Guides (PAGs) Manual, I'd like to take this opportunity to make sure that we are all on the same page about recent decisions regarding the process for releasing the PAGs Manual for public review and comment. I've attached a draft Communications Strategy that I believe will help guide us in this process.

Based on the AA-level discussion, we will be confining the scope of the PAGs Manual to the early and intermediate phases, focusing on what is needed for emergency response. We will not include a drinking water PAG because EPA has established protective drinking water standards for radionuclides under the Safe Drinking Water Act. We also will not include a late phase chapter for two reasons: 1) this is an emergency response document and 2) there are existing state and federal regulations and programs that apply to the cleanup.

Acknowledging potential concern from DHS, you will see in the Communications Strategy that we believe it is appropriate to discuss our new approach with DHS before meeting with the rest of the Interagency community. We will discuss the new direction we are taking on the PAGs Manual, emphasizing the reasoning above for our new approach, so that DHS is not surprised when we begin the Interagency discussions.

We are looking forward to working closely with your staff to refine the language for the PAGs Manual and the FR Notice in order to create a document that reflects the AAs' decisions. As I'm sure you agree, it's important that we move forward as one on this issue. So, please don't hesitate to contact me at 343-9356 if you have any thoughts, concerns, or questions on the manual or proposed outreach plans.

Thanks alot, Mike

(See attached file: PAGs Comm Plan 6-4-2010.doc)

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robmac58 2011-03-24 22:33

I am slowly getting it through my thick head that the main function of government agencies today is nothing more than to provide window dressing and smiley faces. Make what people can see look like everything is normal. Hide, obstruct, falsify or deny everything else. This is certainly true with regard to the world of finance, banking and markets. The callous disregard for the health and safety of people should tell us all that we need to know. That is we really are on our own.

+ 12

gibbgeor 2011-03-25 00:45 +3
I was just saying on the Reuters site;

How many people are fed up with stories that start with
"A 9.0 magnitude earthquake and resulting tsunami have damaged nuclear power stations in Japan. "

Its in every newspaper - every newscast - every nuc site. Its like shopping at Walmart and the little "we sell for less" signs.
no wonder most people don't know up from down anymore.

gallagher 2011-03-25 11:38 +1
I think they anticipated your disdain. You can now get "In Libya today..." flavor too.

RonGermanJr 2011-03-27 13:55 0
that is all governments have **EVER** been for!

srelf 2011-03-31 06:30 0
Good article.Thanks!

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