



Nevada Site Office News

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Possible Radon Radiation Detected From Milford Flat Fire

Since July 5 elevated radiation levels, presumably due to the Milford Flat Fire, have been detected for brief periods at the Milford, Utah, Community Environmental Monitoring Program (CEMP) station. All other CEMP monitoring stations show normal readings associated with naturally occurring background levels of radiation.

The highest reading at the Milford CEMP station is almost 140 microRem per hour. Normal readings for this station average approximately 20 microRem per hour. A detailed report of the station readings can be found on the internet at www.cemp.dri.edu/cemp. "These elevated readings are believed to be related to the intense heating of the rock and soil from the Milford Flat Fire burning north of Milford and should have no impact on public health or the environment," commented Bruce Hurley, National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office (NNSA/NSO) Program Manager, who oversees the monitoring program. "As the rock heats, naturally-occurring radioactive radon in the soil is released to the atmosphere at a much greater rate. The CEMP equipment is quite sensitive and can detect this change and record it as an elevated reading." The Desert Research Institute (DRI) has collected air filters from the monitoring equipment located at the station for further analysis. Results from these additional analyses also will be posted to the CEMP website.

The CEMP stations were established as real-time radiological monitoring to enable scientists and the public to detect any potential off-site migration of radiological constituents from the Nevada Test Site (NTS). There have been no recent activities at the NTS which could have caused release of radiation off-site.

The CEMP is a network of 29 monitoring stations located in Nevada, Utah, and California communities and ranch locations surrounding and downwind of the NTS. The sensitive equipment captures changes in the airborne environment that indicate radioactivity. The CEMP is a joint effort between the NNSA/NSO and the DRI of the Nevada System of Higher Education. Data from all of the monitoring stations are published in the Nevada Test Site Environmental Report available at www.nv.doe.gov.

The network stations are comprised of instruments that collect a variety of environmental radiological and meteorological data. DRI employs local citizens, many of them high school science teachers, to manage the stations. Their routine tasks include minor equipment maintenance, collection and routing of air filters to DRI for analysis. Program funding and equipment are provided by NNSA/NSO. Program management is led by DRI and includes technical direction, employment, and training of the station monitors.

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