

We have experienced many examples of minor release of toxic materials into the atmosphere, despite the most careful precautions, in nuclear test experiments. The Skull Valley incident was a clear warning about similar accidents in field tests of chemical warfare agents. It showed how the security blanket prevents ~~the~~ critical forethought about unexpected hazards to the public; it also illustrated how far a security-bound activity must go in covering up its mistakes after they ~~have~~ happen, again ~~preventing~~ ^{hindering} the full use of informed professional judgment in protecting the public.

When we consider biological warfare agents, we must remember that no release is a minor one. The characteristic of these ~~agents~~ ^{agents} is unknowingly that they propagate, so that a single particle ~~lodged~~ inhaled by a single person, hundreds of miles from the point of release could start a devastating epidemic, whose original source might never be provable. ~~These~~ ^{These} ~~infectious~~ agents can also infect wild animals, with a long chain of infection in them and in their parasites, before man is involved. As dormant spores, these agents can persist for years, perhaps even centuries, before being unwittingly revived and infecting man. Every open field test of a human pathogen is a global experiment; those who would conduct such experiments must answer to mankind/ for the consequences.

Joshua Lederberg

Statement prepared
to Senator Nelson.