

Cancer risks studied near 7 US nuclear sites

STEPHEN SINGER - Associated Press - Associated Press

Federal regulators say a pilot study of cancer risks posed to residents near seven nuclear power sites in the United States will update 22-year-old data, but an industry group says the study won't come up with anything new.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission plans to study multiple cancer types in infants and the general population near six nuclear power plants and a nuclear-fuel plant for the Navy.

The National Academy of Sciences recommended the sites in California, Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, New Jersey and Tennessee because they represent a broad sample of plants with different operating histories, population sizes, and data in state cancer registries.

The \$2 million study is expected to begin in the next three months and continue at least into 2014, the NRC announced Tuesday.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission regulations and licenses require plants to maintain a program to monitor radioactivity and to issue annual reports. The most radiation that a nearby resident could be exposed to is usually less than 1 percent of what the average American receives in a year from all sources, the agency said.

"Nonetheless, some stakeholders have expressed recurrent concerns about the potential effect of these releases on the health of residents living near nuclear facilities," the NRC said.

In determining risks, the NRC currently uses a 1990 National Cancer Institute report and other more recent epidemiology reports. But the agency said that more modern analysis methods and up-to-date information sources will provide "contemporary cancer information in current populations" who live near licensed nuclear plants.

The Nuclear Energy Institute, the policy arm of an industry group, opposes the study.

"In our view, the report recommends an epidemiological study that will likely involve an outlay of significant resources without much expectation for a meaningful outcome in regard to advancing the scientific understanding of potential risks," Ralph L. Andersen, a senior director at the institute, has said.

Andersen says many states also have monitoring programs and industry programs to monitor and control radiation dose to the public are "carefully and regularly inspected" by federal safety specialists.

The seven sites are Connecticut's Millstone Power Station in Waterford owned by

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Dominion Resources Inc. and a decommissioned plant in Haddam Neck; Edison International's San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station in San Clemente, Calif.; Exelon Corp.'s Dresden Nuclear Power Station in Morris, Ill.; a decommissioned plant in Charlevoix, Mich.; Exelon's Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Forked River, N.J.; and Nuclear Fuel Services in Erwin, Tenn., which makes fuel for the Navy.

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