

Tularosa Basin Downwinders Consortium (TBDC)
Potential Impact of the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) Amendments
on the Health of the People of New Mexico

About TBDC

- It was co-founded in 2005 by Fred Tyler and Tina Cordova.
- Our mission is to bring attention to the negative health effects from the radioactive fallout that resulted from the July 16, 1945, Trinity Test.
- We are working on a Health Impact Assessment with the financial assistance of the Santa Fe Community Foundation and the New Mexico Health Equity Partnership.

Facts about the Trinity Test

- On July 16, 1945, a plutonium bomb nicknamed “The Gadget” was detonated at the Trinity Site near Socorro, New Mexico.
- The bomb was created in Los Alamos as part of Site-Y of the Manhattan Project; it was a prototype for Fat Man, the plutonium bomb that was exploded in Nagasaki, Japan, on August 9, 1945.
- The bomb contained 13.2 pounds of weapons-grade plutonium-239.
- Only 2.6 pounds of the total 13.2 pounds of plutonium fissioned during the blast; the remaining 10.6 pounds were dispersed into the environment, blanketing the farmers and ranchers who grew their own food, milked cows, and collected rainwater in cisterns for drinking.

Concerns

- Neighboring residents, such as William Wyre, reported a white, flour-like substance that fell from the sky for five days after the blast.
- Other residents reported the appearance of “snow” or “frost” on the ground or on fence posts.
- The fallout from the explosion was tracked by Manhattan Project affiliates as far as New York and New England and out to sea.
- The U.S. government described the area near the Trinity Site as “remote” and “uninhabited,” which simply is not true.
- According to U.S. Census records, more than 40,000 people lived in the four counties surrounding the Trinity Site: Lincoln, Otero, Sierra, and Socorro.
- The U.S. government did *not* warn residents before the bomb blast nor evacuate residents after the bomb blast despite high levels of radiation.
- Residents were never examined to determine internal radiation doses from inhaling contaminated air and ingesting contaminated food and/or water.
- The people of New Mexico were the first victims of an atomic bomb and were unknowing, unwilling, uncompensated, and innocent participants in the world’s largest science experiment.
- Cancer rates in Lincoln, Otero, Sierra, and Socorro counties are three to eight times higher than the national rate.
- There has never been an assessment of the environmental impact of the Trinity Test and the possible continued exposure to the communities that surround the Trinity Site.

Radiation Exposure Compensation Act

- Senator Tom Udall and Senator Martin Heinrich have both met with the downwinders to hear their stories and discuss government action.

- In 1990, the U.S. government created the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) to compensate people who were made sick living downwind from the Nevada Nuclear Test Site.
- The fund has been available to downwinders in parts of Nevada, Utah, Idaho, and Colorado but never to New Mexico

RECA COVERED AREAS



- RECA covers some New Mexico uranium miners but only people who worked in and around the mines prior to 1971 and only have certain forms of cancer.
- The fund has paid out over \$2 billion in claims and provided invaluable health care coverage to the downwinders of the Nevada test site.

Health Impact Assessment

- Over five years ago, TBDC developed a health survey to document the health effects that people were suffering, namely the high levels of cancer.
 - TBDC has collected over 800 health surveys from people associated with Otero and Socorro counties.
- The health surveys reflect histories of cancers and thyroid diseases, in particular, that many people have endured but that many others have died from, especially cancers that are linked to radiation exposure
 - The Health Impact Assessment is examining three health determinants: 1) Lack of Access to Health Care; 2) Economic Impact to Patients and Families; and 3) Generational Trauma.

Contact Us

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