



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



EPA Reports Trace Amounts of Cesium-137 in Vermont Milk

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BURLINGTON, VT - The federal Environmental Protection Agency is reporting on its RadNet website that trace amounts of cesium-137 have been detected in milk collected in the Montpelier area on March 30 and analyzed by EPA. No iodine-131 was detected.

RadNet data for decades before the nuclear disaster in Japan also show trace amounts of cesium-137 in milk from Vermont and other states.

Two separate samples collected and analyzed by the Vermont Department of Health from Windham County on April 6 have shown no detectable cesium-137 or iodine-131.

"The amounts reported by EPA are miniscule, barely detectable," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "We have good reason to believe that this is not a result of the tragedy in Japan. Regardless, there is no health risk from drinking milk, and there is plenty of benefit."

The amount detected was 1.9 picocuries per liter (pCi/L), with an uncertainty value of 1.6 pCi/L.

"A person is normally exposed to about 600 millirem of radiation every year," said Dr. Chen. "Using the most conservative estimates, drinking milk with these trace amounts for one full year would add 0.01 millirem to exposure."

Harmful amounts of radioactivity from Japan are still not expected to reach as far as the U.S. However, past events have shown that very small amounts of radioactivity carried by natural air currents will build up very slowly over time in soil, sediment, fungi and other materials.

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