

Press Release:

**Environmental Health Subcommittee of West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group
26 November 2009, Civic Hall, Cleator Moor**

At a public meeting on 26 November, the Environmental Health Subcommittee of West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group reviewed levels of Sellafield radioactivity in the West Cumbrian environment on the basis of the most recent reports (for calendar year 2008) from the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science and from Sellafield Limited.

Sellafield radioactivity makes a small contribution to annual radiation doses received by individual members of the public, depending on their activities and dietary habits. Regular surveys of activities and habits are used, together with measurements of environmental radioactivity, to estimate doses for groups of consumers likely to be most affected.

Sellafield discharges are now very small compared with those typical of 30 years ago. For this reason, historic radioactivity contributes nearly ninety-nine percent of today's radiation dose estimates. From time to time, remobilisation of old sediments contributes to increased estimates of radiation dose but a general slow decline is to be expected.

The highest doses reported were for a local group of very high consumers of seafood (consuming nearly 100 kilograms per year). It is estimated that in 2008, they received a dose of about 0.23 millisieverts from Sellafield radioactivity in seafood (about the same as estimated for 2006 and 2007).

Former discharges from the phosphate works at Whitehaven produced increased levels of natural radioactivity in the marine environment. The works were demolished in 2004 and discharges have ceased. However, the contribution to the dose of seafood consumers from this enhanced natural radioactivity greatly exceeds that from Sellafield discharges. It is estimated as 0.39 millisieverts for 2008 (more than in 2005, 6 and 7 but less than in 2004).

These variations in doses to seafood consumers arise partly by movements of sediments containing radioactivity from earlier periods and partly by changes in seafood consumption.

Estimates of doses to seafood consumers at places more distant from Sellafield did not exceed 0.05 millisieverts. Some Ribble houseboat dwellers were estimated to have received about 0.13 millisieverts from external radiation emitted by estuary floor sediments.

All such dose estimates can be compared with 2.2mSv average UK background dose received from natural sources of radiation.

Professor John Haywood, Chairman

Note to Editors

Radioactivity in Food and the Environment, 2008 (RIFE - 14) is compiled by the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science on behalf of the Environment Agency, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the Food Standards Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. <http://www.food.gov.uk/science/surveillance/radiosurv/rife/rife08/>

Monitoring Our Environment, Discharges and Monitoring in the UK is the 2008 Annual Monitoring Report of Sellafield Limited. This report will be available on the Sellafield Sites website (www.sellafieldsites.com).

The Environmental Health Sub-Committee of The West Cumbria Sites Stakeholder Group pays particular attention to the potential impact on human health of Sellafield and the Low Level Waste Repository (LLWR) Waste Management Site.

The Sub-Committee takes reports relating to the effects on the environment of operations at Sellafield and LLWR and evaluates any implications for the community.

Independent experts on this sub-committee cross reference the Site Operator's figures with those of many other sources, in order to ensure that possible risks are not overlooked. Moreover, they can pursue enquiries directly with the Site Operator and Government bodies in a highly informed way. As a consequence, the concerns of the community are always taken to the right people. The Sub-Committee continues its enquiries until a resolution is secured.

EHSC meetings are public and take place on the last Thursdays in May and November.

Minutes are published at <http://www.wcssg.co.uk/document-library/envirohealth-documents>