

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Edward G. Rendell, Governor
Calvin B. Johnson, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary of Health

(717) 346-3285

February 20, 2007

Sarah Kirkland
Executive Vice-President
Susquehanna University
514 University Avenue
Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania 17870

Dear Vice President Kirkland:

I'm pleased to provide you the Pennsylvania Department of Health's assessment of cancer risk for residents in the Selinsgrove area, including Susquehanna University. The Department reviewed information regarding the ambient environment, as well as the incidence of cancer for the region based on zip code area 17870. As you are aware there is concern by parents that facilities on and off campus have contributed to their children's health problems, specifically cancer. It has been alleged that cancer rates are elevated and the direct result of area pollutants.

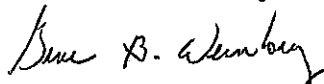
Several sources of pollution are purported to contribute to health problems on campus. Air pollution in the form of visible particulates from building materials manufacturing in Sunbury has been documented. However, these pollutants are not recognized as a causative agent for lung and other cancers. Reference has also been made to ionizing radiation emissions from both the Three Mile Island and Berwick power plants. Radiation exposures from nuclear power plants are extremely low. Based on official reports, persons living from 1 mile to 35 miles from nuclear power plants are exposed to a dose ranging from 0.00001 millirem to a high of 0.05 millirem. In contrast, the average dose to persons in the United States from all radiation sources is between 100 and 300 millirem per year. Also, implicated are chemical pollutants from in-ground sources feeding into the local public water supply. Yet, there is no evidence to support this idea.

Additionally, the Health Department reviewed local cancer incidence data; each year nearly 75,000 new cases are diagnosed statewide among Pennsylvania citizens. The number of local cases was compared to the number that would be expected based on statewide rates. Between 1996 and 2003 a total of 679 new cases occurred compared to 757 expected, indicating the risk

for your area was 10 percent lower than the state's. The types observed were identical to the rest of the state, and their rates were similar or lower than Pennsylvania's rates.

In summary, the Health Department examined both proposed causative factors and the types and frequencies of cancers that occurred in the Selinsgrove area. Based on the types of cancer in the area and their rates, there is no indication that the ambient environment contributes to the incidence of cancer, and there are no environmental data to demonstrate that there have been human exposures to carcinogens at sufficiently high doses to increase the risk to area residents. I hope this information is useful. If you have additional questions please call.

Sincerely,



Gene B. Weinberg, M.P.H., Dr. PH
Director,
Division of Community Epidemiology
Pennsylvania Department of Health

cc: Michael Huff
Dr. Ostroff
Elizabeth Casale