

# Casualties of Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster: “Official” and Other Versions

Thursday 28 April 2011, by [SHERMAN Janette](#) (Date first published: 22 March 2011).

## I. How many people died and how many more are likely to die in the future?

The total number of deaths already attributable to Chernobyl or expected in the future over the lifetime of emergency workers and local residents in the most contaminated areas is estimated to be about 4000. This includes some 50 emergency workers who died of acute radiation syndrome and nine children who died of thyroid cancer, and an estimated total of 3940 deaths from radiation-induced cancer and leukemia among the 200 000 emergency workers from 1986-1987, 116 000 evacuees and 270 000 residents of the most contaminated areas (total about 600 000). These three major cohorts were subjected to higher doses of radiation amongst all the people exposed to Chernobyl radiation.

The estimated 4000 casualties may occur during the lifetime of about 600 000 people under consideration. As about quarter of them will eventually die from spontaneous cancer not caused by Chernobyl radiation, the radiation-induced increase of about 3% will be difficult to observe. However, in the most highly exposed cohorts of emergency and recovery operation workers, some increase in particular cancers (e.g., leukemia) has already been observed.

Confusion about the impact has arisen owing to the fact that thousands of people in the affected areas have died of natural causes. Also, widespread expectations of ill health and a tendency to attribute all health problems to radiation exposure have led local residents to assume that Chernobyl related fatalities were much higher than they actually were.

\* *This is official version. Source:*

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2005/pr38/en/index1.html>.]

Nearly one million people around the world died from exposure to radiation released by the 1986 nuclear disaster at the Chernobyl reactor, finds a new book from the New York Academy of Sciences published today on the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the meltdown at the Soviet facility.

The book, *Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and the Environment*, was compiled by authors Alexey Yablokov of the Center for Russian Environmental Policy in Moscow, and Vassily Nesterenko and Alexey Nesterenko of the Institute of Radiation Safety, in Minsk, Belarus.

The authors examined more than 5,000 published articles and studies, most written in Slavic languages and never before available in English.

The authors said, “For the past 23 years, it has been clear that there is a danger greater than nuclear weapons concealed within nuclear power. Emissions from this one reactor exceeded a hundred-fold the radioactive contamination of the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.”

“No citizen of any country can be assured that he or she can be protected from radioactive contamination. One nuclear reactor can pollute half the globe,” they said. “Chernobyl fallout covers

the entire Northern Hemisphere.”

Their findings are in contrast to estimates by the World Health Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency that initially said only 31 people had died among the “liquidators,” those approximately 830,000 people who were in charge of extinguishing the fire at the Chernobyl reactor and deactivation and cleanup of the site.

The book finds that by 2005, between 112,000 and 125,000 liquidators had died.

“On this 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, we now realize that the consequences were far worse than many researchers had believed,” says Janette Sherman, MD, the physician and toxicologist who edited the book.

Drawing upon extensive data, the authors estimate the number of deaths worldwide due to Chernobyl fallout from 1986 through 2004 was 985,000, a number that has since increased.

*\* This is by independent researchers:*

<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2010/04/26>.

## **II. How many people have been displaced?**

The entire town of Pripyat (population 49,360), which lay only three kilometres from the plant was completely evacuated 36 hours after the accident. During the subsequent weeks and months an additional 67,000 people were evacuated from their homes in contaminated areas and relocated on government order. In total some 200,000 people are believed to have been relocated as a result of the accident.

*\* Official version:*

<http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/features/chernobyl-15/chno-faq.shtml>

## **III. What are the major health effects for exposed populations?**

There have been at least 1800 documented cases of thyroid cancer children who were between 0 and 14 years of age when the accident occurred, which is far higher than normal. The thyroid gland of young children is particularly susceptible to the uptake of radioactive iodine, which can trigger cancers, treatable both by surgery and medication. Health studies of the registered cleanup workers called in (so-called “liquidators”) have failed to show any direct correlation between their radiation exposure and an increase in other forms of cancer or disease. The psychological affects of Chernobyl were and remain widespread and profound, and have resulted for instance in suicides, drinking problems and apathy.

*Official version:*

<http://www.iaea.org/newscenter/features/chernobyl-15/chno-faq.shtml>.

Yablokov and his co-authors find that radioactive emissions from the stricken reactor, once believed to be 50 million curies, may have been as great as 10 billion curies, or 200 times greater than the initial estimate, and hundreds of times larger than the fallout from the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Nations outside the former Soviet Union received high doses of radioactive fallout, most notably Norway, Sweden, Finland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Austria, Romania, Greece, and parts of the United Kingdom and Germany.

About 550 million Europeans, and 150 to 230 million others in the Northern Hemisphere received notable contamination. Fallout reached the United States and Canada nine days after the disaster.

The proportion of children considered healthy born to irradiated parents in Belarus, the Ukraine, and European Russia considered healthy fell from about 80 percent to less than 20 percent since 1986.

Numerous reports reviewed for this book document elevated disease rates in the Chernobyl area. These include increased fetal and infant deaths, birth defects, and diseases of the respiratory, digestive, musculoskeletal, nervous, endocrine, reproductive, hematological, urological, cardiovascular, genetic, immune, and other systems, as well as cancers and non-cancerous tumors.

In addition to adverse effects in humans, numerous other species have been contaminated, based upon studies of livestock, voles, birds, fish, plants, trees, bacteria, viruses, and other species.

Foods produced in highly contaminated areas in the former Soviet Union were shipped, and consumed worldwide, affecting persons in many other nations. Some, but not all, contamination was detected and contaminated foods not shipped.

The authors warn that the soil, foliage, and water in highly contaminated areas still contain substantial levels of radioactive chemicals, and will continue to harm humans for decades to come.

\*This is by independent researchers:

<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2010/04/26>

**Janette Sherman**

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\* Janette Sherman.com:

<http://janettesherman.com/2011/03/22/casualties-of-chernobyl-nuclear-disaster-“official”-and-other-versions/>

\* Janette D. Sherman, M. D. is a specialist in internal medicine and toxicology. She has published more than 70 articles in the scientific literature and also writes for the popular press to provide information to the concerned public. Dr. Sherman is the author of Life's Delicate Balance: Causes and Prevention of Breast Cancer and Chemical Exposure and Disease. She has recently completed the translation and editing of the book Chernobyl: Consequences of the Catastrophe for People and Nature, written by A. V. Yablokov, V. B. Nesterenko and A. V. Nesterenko, published by the New York Academy of Sciences in December 2009.