



2026

Environmental Exposure Letter for Primary Care Providers

Regarding patients who lived, attended school, or worked near the former Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant

Dear Primary Care Provider:

We are writing regarding an important environmental public-health concern: the possible lasting health effects of exposure to hazardous materials released during operations at the former Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant northwest of Denver (communities closest to the plant include Arvada, Broomfield, Federal Heights, Golden, Lafayette, Lakewood, Northglenn, South Boulder, Superior, Westminster, Wheat Ridge). A history of living, working or attending school near the former nuclear facility may be clinically relevant and should not be overlooked.

From 1952 until plutonium operations ended in 1989, Rocky Flats manufactured nuclear-weapons components. Historical operations involved plutonium, uranium, americium, beryllium, solvents, and other hazardous substances. Fires, waste handling practices, and environmental releases are part of the documented history of the site, which later underwent a federal Superfund cleanup.

Inhaled plutonium particles can remain in the lungs and expose nearby tissue to alpha radiation; material entering the bloodstream may concentrate in the bones and liver. Americium can also remain in the body for decades. Health effects from internal radiation exposure may not appear until many years after exposure.

Radiation exposure has been associated with a range of cancers, including:

- Leukemia (excluding chronic lymphocytic leukemia)
- Lymphomas other than Hodgkin disease
- Multiple myeloma
- Primary cancers of the thyroid
- Primary cancers of the breast (female or male)
- Primary cancers of the esophagus, stomach, pharynx, and small intestine
- Primary cancers of the pancreas, bile ducts, gallbladder, and liver
- Primary cancers of the salivary gland, urinary bladder, and kidney/renal system
- Primary cancers of the brain, colon, ovary, bone, and lung

This list describes cancers associated with radiation exposure; it does not mean that every case is radiation-induced. Residence near Rocky Flats does not in and of itself establish an individual dose or prove that the facility caused a particular illness. However, awareness of this history can help ensure that a potentially relevant environmental factor is not overlooked.

We share this letter to support respectful, informed conversations between patients and their health-care providers. We do not diagnose disease, estimate an individual radiation dose, or establish a special screening protocol. Rocky Flats Downwinders is a Colorado 501(c)(3) community organization created by and for people connected to Rocky Flats.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Hansen

Co-founder and Director, Rocky Flats Downwinders

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