

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

Anthropogenic sources of radioactivity in the Arctic are still a concern according to new AMAP assessment

The potential for future radioactive contamination of the Arctic as a result of releases from sources within the Arctic and also outside of the region remains a concern. Development of extractive industries in the Arctic will increase the risks of radioactive contamination.

These and other findings are presented in the new *AMAP assessment of Radioactivity in the Arctic* (www.amap.no/documents/doc/AMAP-Assessment-2015-Radioactivity-in-the-Arctic/1457). This fourth AMAP radioactivity assessment builds on information presented in 1998, 2004 and 2009. It reviews new information concerning actual and potential sources of radioactive contamination in the Arctic, and provides updates in cases where this new information either warrants revised assessment or relates to operations and sources not considered previously.

Although levels of anthropogenic radioactivity measured in the Arctic and attributed to already identified sources are generally very low and declining, the potential for future leakages remains. Continued monitoring of radioactivity in the Arctic is essential, especially in the vicinity of the large amounts of radioactive waste previously dumped at sea and still stored on land.

The assessment also finds that:

- **The catastrophic accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in 2011 demonstrates that sources far from the Arctic have the potential to contaminate the region**
Radioactivity from the Fukushima accident was detected in the Arctic, albeit at very low levels. However, detection of radioactive contamination from distant sources underlines the importance of environmental monitoring in the region to document levels and transport of radioactivity.
- **Ongoing decommissioning work is helping to mitigate risks**
Previously identified potential sources of radioactivity, such as radioisotope thermoelectric generators (RTGs) and waste from decommissioning at sites such as Gremikha and Andreeva Bay in north-western Russia are slowly being cleaned-up. However, continued remediation and monitoring by the Arctic nations is essential.
- **Elevated levels of natural radioactivity give cause for future concern**
The Arctic is undergoing a period of significant change: Permafrost thawing associated with climate change may increase releases of naturally occurring radon and associated doses to local populations.
The development of extractive industries in the Arctic will lead to increased pollution. Oil and gas extraction and the waste streams produced in the extraction of minerals – such as uranium – contain naturally occurring radioactive substances found in bedrock leading to enhanced releases and mobilisation of these naturally occurring radionuclides.

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