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Northwest prepared to monitor arrival of radioactive cloud

OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Alaska and Washington state stepped up radiation monitoring Tuesday as officials prepared for the expected arrival of a radioactive cloud from an accident at a nuclear power plant in the Soviet Union.

Experts said the fallout, expected to appear over the northwestern United States as early as Saturday, probably would pose no health threat.

Federal officials have said if the radioactive cloud from the accident at Chernobyl, in the Ukraine, ascends to 15,000 feet or higher, it probably would pass over the polar ice cap, move across Canada and into the northwestern United States.

According to Charlie Porter, director of federal Eastern Environmental Radiation Facility in Montgomery, Ala., Alaska is likely to be the first state to detect the cloud as it travels around the globe. It may be days or weeks before any signs are detected in North America, he said.

"There's a lot of things that can happen with the winds up there, and it could just get dispersed," Porter said. "But the way the polar winds usually travel, if it comes our way, Alaska's the first one it comes to."

The cloud is in the jet stream, at least 30,000 feet high, and could pass over Alaska and the rest of the United States unnoticed, he said.

Porter said the radiation levels de-

tected in the Scandinavian countries were still below what would be immediately harmful.

The jet stream, moving at speeds of up to 150 mph, carries the upper atmosphere over Greenland and the polar regions to Alaska, then south across the Pacific Northwest and over the Midwest, Porter said.

Because meteorologists and other scientists can't predict accurately where the prevailing winds will take the cloud, the Environmental Protection Agency's monitoring network in all 50 states will be watching for unusually high radiation readings, he said.

"As soon as someone finds anything unusual, they'll send it to our laboratory for testing," Porter said.

According to Al Ewing, regional administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency, more than a dozen stations across Alaska are being checked daily rather than once every two weeks, and two special radioactivity monitors in Juneau and Alaska have been activated.

The Soviet Union said the accident had damaged an atomic reactor at the Chernobyl power plant in the Ukraine. Radiation as much as 10 times above normal was recorded north of Stockholm, Sweden, and this included iodine and cesium compounds — both products of nuclear fission which would be produced in uranium reactor fuel.

Meltdown

(continued from page 1)

and large portions of the walls (of the reactor building) had caved in," the administration official said. "And it seemed at the time that (another) nuclear unit just above it might still be in some danger."

The source said the U.S. government was convinced there had been a huge release of radiation, but that the most serious radioactive fallout on the ground occurred within an area stretching out about 10 miles from the plant.

This official also said the intelligence analysts were now convinced the accident occurred Saturday.

Reports reaching the State Department said Soviet authorities were hampered in their efforts to put out the fire because of the intense heat. They were also concerned that dousing the fire could

create more radioactivity than simply letting the reactor burn, according to a source who insisted on anonymity.

Adelman said those in the greatest risk are apparently the inhabitants of a village of 2,000 persons built to house workers at the nuclear facility and their families.

When told by a senator that the Soviet Union has claimed that only two people were killed by the accident, he said that was "frankly preposterous in terms of an accident of this magnitude."

"There is concern over water contamination," Adelman told a Senate committee Tuesday afternoon. "It is on a river. We've got to assume the water level is relatively high. The burning core at 4,000 degrees is at

Thumbs Up
A&M announces winners of mathematics contest

The annual freshman and sophomore mathematics contests were held April 16 for Texas A&M students. First place winners were awarded \$100, second place winners won \$60 and third place winners received \$40. The prizes were provided by the Hillel Halperin Mathematics Award Fund and the Robert F. Smith Memorial Fund.

In the sophomore contest first place honors went to Andrew

Spears, a chemical engineering major; second place went to David McCoy, a physics major; and Khalid S. Warraich, a computer science major, won third place.

In the freshman contest first place went to Glenn Mullikin, an applied mathematics major; second place went to Clifford Kravvieda, a mathematics major; and third place went to Tommy Guess, an electrical engineering major.

Booster joint found; debris search ends

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Searchers have recovered a long-sought section of Challenger's right booster rocket containing the lower half of the joint that caused the shuttle to explode, NASA announced Tuesday.

With the recovery of this piece, which the agency called a "significant component," NASA said it had terminated the hunt for additional rocket debris — three months and a day after the Jan. 28 disaster killed seven astronauts.

Officials said a few ships would continue recovering parts of the shuttle itself from the floor of the Atlantic Ocean.

Another piece of rocket debris with the upper section of the suspect joint was recovered several weeks ago. It contained a 2-square-foot jagged hole burned out by an escaping plume of flame, but the space agency said it has provided no clue to what caused the joint to fail.

Officials said a similar jagged hole was burned through the piece retrieved Monday by the salvage ship Stena Workhorse.

The search fleet had been seeking this section ever since its mate was found. Experts believe that by putting them together, they may be able to trace burn patterns that could tell them what went wrong.

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