



BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN  
NUCLEAR DANGERS & A SAFE,  
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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### Winter 2015 Newsletter

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# SANTA SUSANA WILL IT EVER GET CLEANED UP?

## CBG NEEDS YOUR HELP

For 45 years, CBG has worked against great odds on behalf of peace and the environment. Many victories have been won, but as you can see on the pages of this newsletter, each accomplishment has met with enormous pushback from powerful forces. The steadfast work of CBG has never been more important in these struggles and your support is critical for this work to continue.

Please make a tax-deductible donation today using the enclosed envelope - or donate online at [www.committeetobridgethegap.org](http://www.committeetobridgethegap.org).

Check our website at [www.committeetobridgethegap.org](http://www.committeetobridgethegap.org) to view Dan Hirsch's congressional testimony, links to the NBC4 I-Team series, breaking developments and CBG in the news.

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by *CBG President*  
*Dan Hirsch*

ON DECEMBER 6, 2010, THE state and federal governments signed legally binding agreements assuring that all the contamination that could be detected at Santa Susana Field Laboratory (SSFL) would be cleaned up. After 36 years of effort by the community, elected officials, and assistance from Bridge the Gap, it seemed there was cause to rejoice. Half a century after a nuclear reactor there experienced a partial meltdown, there was finally a commitment to clean up all the radioactive and chemical pollution at the site. Radioactive and toxic wastes had been burned in open pits. Thousands of tests of missile and rocket engines were conducted, with toxic chemicals released into the air and spilled onto the soil and



Santa Susana Area IV. Photo by Preston Bowling

**Boeing itself estimates that if people lived on the property, as many as 96 out of 100 would get cancer from the contamination.**

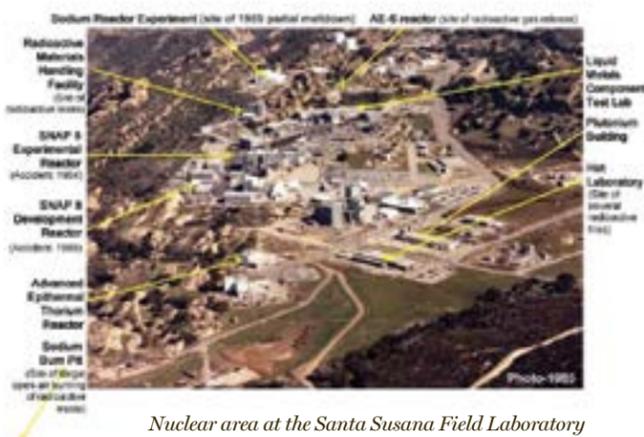
into the ground water. The site has been leaking contaminants offsite for sixty years. But at

last, all the hard work had paid off. There were celebrations in the neighborhoods nearby.

Now, however, it appears the site may never get cleaned up, and that immense risks could remain in perpetuity. In a series of extraordinary reports by the Boeing Company, which owns most of SSFL, Boeing admits to astronomical levels of toxic contamination in the soil, but asks state approval to not clean up approximately 98% of it. The reports are thousands of pages long, and the smoking gun revelations are buried far in the back in tables that need a magnifying glass to read. But a team from CBG has been analyzing these reports, with amazing revelations.

Hidden deep within these risk assessments, Boeing itself estimates that if people lived on the property, as many as 96 out of 100 would get cancer from the contamination. This is an astonishing level of contamination, with estimated risks far higher than seen virtually

*continued on page 2*



Nuclear area at the Santa Susana Field Laboratory

**SANTA SUSANA - CONTINUED**

anywhere else in the country. But even with this extraordinary admission of contamination and hazard, Boeing nonetheless proposes to declare as “no further action” the great majority of its land; meaning no cleanup. Boeing estimates this would leave behind risks as high as every fifth person getting cancer from the contamination, on top of the cancers that would occur otherwise.

Publicly, Boeing has said it will clean the site up to a suburban residential standard, so that it would be safe to live on it. Even if no one did, the people who lived nearby would be protected, they say. Yet, hidden thousands of pages back in its own reports are these revelations to the contrary.

The Boeing reports are before the state toxics department, awaiting its approval. The department is a deeply troubled, captured agency, which has been breaching nearly every commitment it made to the communities near Santa Susana to assure full cleanup. Boeing has hired lobbyists close to Governor Brown. Whether money and power or ethics and protection of everyday people win out is yet to be seen. For 36 years CBG has tried to help get the site cleaned up. The saga continues.

**DIABLO CANYON EARTHQUAKE RISK**  
**“IT COULD HAPPEN TOMORROW”**

THE FUKUSHIMA TRAGEDY, the Japanese parliamentary investigation into it concluded, was caused by a too-cozy relationship between the reactor operator and its regulator. This allowed the nuclear plant to be built to withstand only an earthquake and tsunami far smaller than actually occurred. Similar problems plague the American nuclear regulatory system as well. The Diablo Canyon case suggests the Fukushima lessons have not been learned here.

Diablo was designed and permitted based on the claim that *there were no active faults within thirty kilometers of the plant*. The maximum ground shaking it was required to be able to handle was set accordingly. **We now know, however, there are at least four large active faults nearby, all capable of more ground motion than the plant was originally designed for.**

Each time there was a new, belated seismic discovery at Diablo, however, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission gave



CBG's Dan Hirsch testifies before the U.S. Senate Environment & Public Works Committee

PG&E a pass. Rules were relaxed, safety margins reduced, public hearings denied. The most recent discoveries of increased seismic risk have met the same fate.

PG&E recently released two seismic studies, showing earthquake faults longer, more capable, and more connected to other faults than previously presumed. Nonetheless, the NRC has allowed continued operation, and blocked any evidentiary hearing into the new findings.

A Fukushima-type disaster is just waiting to occur here. All it takes, just as at Fukushima, is an earthquake larger than the plant is capable of withstanding. It could happen tomorrow.

*-excerpted from Senate testimony*

She received her doctorate in record time from UC Berkeley, where she worked with Melvin Calvin on the mechanism of photosynthesis, for which he subsequently won the Nobel Prize. Her husband went to meet with Luis Alvarez (later also a Nobel Laureate) to ask whether it was safe for his wife, then pregnant with son Dan, to be working with radioactive carbon-14 as part of Calvin's research team. Alvarez said “Don't worry about the radiation; just look at Ernest Lawrence [the famous head of the Berkeley Radiation Lab, for whom Lawrence Livermore Lab was subsequently named], all of his children have the right number of toes and fingers!”

She did pioneering work at Washington University on techniques for dissecting single cells to isolate microscopic organelles, and researching genetic causes of neurological diseases. Subsequently, she was for many years a researcher at UCLA's Reed Neurological Research Center working on cures for ALS and MS. She was a trailblazer in the difficult efforts involving women overcoming chauvinism and prejudice in the sciences. She taught her children that injustice must be opposed, and in that, and in many other ways, her influence will live on.



**IN MEMORIAM:**  
**DR. HILDE ESTHER HIRSCH**

We mourn the loss of longtime CBG supporter, Dr. Hilde Esther Hirsch, 93, who died in November. Dr. Hirsch, 93, was a neurochemist, biochemist, and botanist, and in a very real sense, gave birth to the Committee to Bridge the Gap.

Born in Berlin, she led a remarkable life. Had she not fled Nazi Germany to Britain in her teens, she

almost certainly would have perished. She then emigrated to the British Mandate of Palestine where she would have met the same fate had Rommel not been turned back at the Suez Canal. Shortly after the war ended, her husband Werner was in the King David Hotel when it was blown up on orders of Menachem Begin, the future Israeli Prime Minister. She ran down on foot (because the British stopped all buses) from the Hebrew University on Mt. Scopus to see if Werner was still alive after the bombing; he was.

**NBC4 I-Team Los Angeles**  
**YEAR-LONG INVESTIGATION INTO**  
**LA'S NUCLEAR SECRETS**

THE INVESTIGATIVE team from NBC4, led by producers Joel Grover and Matthew Glasser, has been running a series of hard-hitting pieces about the Santa Susana Field Laboratory. Over a year of intensive research, including interviews with CBG's Dan Hirsch, exposed new revelations: During the partial meltdown in 1959, radiation levels in the reactor building were so high that worker radiation badges were confiscated and huge loading doors were opened to vent the radioactivity right out into the environment. Earlier, the founder of a nearby camp called in the sheriff because the lab was dumping toxic wastes directly into the stream that ran through the camp. More recently, perchlorate has shown up in well water and in milk from a dairy cow at the camp. A prior Secretary of the California EPA was in tears over how the promised cleanup was derailed by Boeing lobbyists after she left



office. Former regulators going through the revolving door to work for Boeing to undo the cleanup promises. NBC says there are more pieces to air, and their investigation will continue for a long time. You can watch the series and review supporting material via links on the CBG website. [www.committeetobridgethegap.org](http://www.committeetobridgethegap.org)

**EPA RADIATION MONITORING SYSTEM BROKEN**  
**CBG Research Reveals Defects**

DURING THE FUKUSHIMA nuclear disaster, U.S. officials repeatedly assured the public that the Environmental Protection Agency had a comprehensive national radiation monitoring network, known as RADNET, and no radioactivity of any consequence was reaching this country. A CBG team extensively researched these claims, however, and discovered that much of the RADNET system was broken and otherwise could not detect the radiation it needed to see, and still can't. In October of this year, the Wall Street Journal ran a major article about these ongoing problems.

The EPA has 135 stationary air monitors throughout the U.S. to measure radioactivity. CBG disclosed that EPA records showed that half were broken at the time of Fukushima. In fact, the WSJ discovered, for

years, and to this day, the real-time beta radiation sensors in three-quarters of the monitors don't work. Additionally, the air monitors can't detect gaseous radioactive iodine, the form most likely to be released in a nuclear accident, and would severely underestimate the radionuclides they could detect.

During the Fukushima disaster, there were no working monitors on the California coast at all between Los Angeles and San Francisco. EPA did have deployable portable monitors that it could have placed in the field to fill gaps, and which could measure radioiodine in the form expected. Inexplicably, someone at EPA headquarters countermanded plans to deploy them on the West Coast. CBG's analysis of precipitation readings that EPA did collect showed that there were significant increases in radioiodine

in rainwater and snow following the accident, although EPA largely buried the data.

The major implication of the flaws in the monitoring system are what they reveal about its inadequacy should it ever be needed because of a radiation release in the U.S. We simply aren't prepared, and the situation has recently gotten worse. EPA, over the objections of state emergency officials and citizens groups, has eliminated the only mobile emergency radiation lab it had for the western part of the U.S. It was designed to respond rapidly to a radiation release. Now should such an event happen, there will be no mobile lab to deploy. Ironically, a few months after the removal of the lab which had been based in Las Vegas, there was a spectacular explosion, apparently of buried waste, at the now-closed Beatty, Nevada radioactive waste dump

(problems at which CBG had long ago addressed). EPA was called in to help, but there was no longer a mobile emergency radiation lab to provide.

EPA has also eliminated its national radiation milk monitoring program that had been in place for decades. And it is proposing to dramatically weaken radiation protection standards, including for drinking water in case of a radiation release and for public exposures from nuclear reactors. All together, this creates a dangerous situation. EPA would be unable to detect the true magnitude and nature of radiation releases, necessary for triggering protective actions, and even if it could, the weak standards would allow extremely high radiation levels without steps required to protect the public. We continue our work to reverse these dangerous trends.