



Uranium and Radiation on the Navajo Nation

BASICS

Quick FACTS

- Uranium is a natural metal element found in rock, soil, and water.
- Radiation is the release of energy and particles from uranium and certain other elements.
- If you have contact with high levels of uranium or radiation, it can cause health problems.
- Because of uranium mining in the past, some soil, water, rocks, and structures on the Navajo Nation have unsafe levels of uranium and radiation.
- You can take steps to protect yourself from contact with uranium.

Here's some more detailed information about uranium on the Navajo Nation.

What is uranium?

Uranium is a metal that exists naturally in the earth. There are small amounts of uranium in almost all the soil, rock, and water in the world. It can move through the environment in rain, wind, and other natural processes.

People have used uranium for building military shielding, weapons, planes and helicopters. It's also used to fuel nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants.

How can I come in contact with uranium, radiation or both?

People can come in contact with uranium, radiation or both on the Navajo Nation by spending time at abandoned uranium mines, living in a home that was built with material from a mine or mill site, drinking unregulated water, or not following good water hauling practices.

Everyone comes in contact with low levels of uranium because it's in the environment. But coming in contact with higher levels of uranium can be harmful to your health.

How can uranium or radiation affect my health?

Contact with uranium is linked to kidney damage, and contact with radiation may increase your risk of getting cancer. Get more information about how uranium and radiation can affect your health by reading the fact sheet *Uranium and Radiation on the Navajo Nation: YOUR HEALTH*.

Why are uranium and radiation a problem on the Navajo Nation?

In some areas of the Navajo Nation there are naturally high levels of uranium. Starting in the 1940's, people mined large amounts of uranium on the Navajo Nation. Mining has brought more uranium to the surface of the earth, making it more available to people. Milling activities have concentrated uranium, making it more powerful. Both mining and milling have made soil, water, and rocks in some parts of the area unsafe.

You can do a lot to reduce contact with uranium on the Navajo Nation. Learn how to reduce your contact with uranium by reading the fact sheet *Uranium and Radiation on the Navajo Nation: REDUCE YOUR CONTACT*.