

Agent's report about formalism in the work of the sanitary and epidemiological station of the Combine military unit and the police in the Chernobyl exclusion zone

May 5, 1989

Secret

According to the order of the Chief Physician of the Kiev Regional SES Station, Comrade V.V. Malyshevsky, from December 12 to 17, 1988, an agent was dispatched to the 30-kilometer Chernobyl zone to conduct sanitary surveys of 14 settlements to which some of the population had returned (the villages of Ostashev, Gorodyshche, Razyezzheye, Ilyintsy, Rudnya Ilynetskaya, Lodyzhichi, Opachichi, Paryshev, Andreyevka, Kupovatske, Teremtsy, Terehi, Koshovka, and Stechanka). The regional SES assigned a mobile radiological laboratory, based on a UAZ 452 vehicle, a driver, and a dosimetrist technician, to carry out the work. The mobile laboratory was equipped with additional devices KRK-1-01, KRB-1-2 units, and SRP 68-01-1 unit. All devices passed state testing in 1988.

The survey was conducted in the presence of Comrade Aleksandr Vladimirovich Zhmur, Head of the Environmental Protection Department of the Chernobyl City Executive Committee. The work was coordinated with the Chernobyl City Executive Committee Chairman, the Department for Regime and Special Work of the Production Association "Combine" of the USSR Ministry of Ecology and Emissions, the Chief Physician of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Station, and the Deputy Head of the Regional Safety Department of the Production Association "Combine."

The Chief Physician of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Station of the Production Association "Combine" informed the Chief Engineer of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant and the Deputy Head of the 3rd Medical Department of the USSR that such work would be carried out. The aforementioned individuals were reluctant to allow us to conduct such work, citing the fact that the 30-kilometer zone is under the control of the USSR Ministry of Ecology and Emissions.

However, without his own information, especially regarding radiation monitoring of food products, the chief physician of the Combine Production Association approved this matter on the condition that we retain this data internally.

I spoke with the doctors at this sanitary and epidemiological station (I don't remember their names), and I got the impression that they were comprised of various specialists, perhaps knowledgeable, but not in the field of radiation hygiene (the chief physician, the head of the organisational department, and doctors from the radiology department).

Characterising the work of the departmental sanitary and epidemiological station, which services the 30-km zone, the following can be noted:

1. The sanitary and epidemiological station does not conduct routine sanitary monitoring of living conditions in these 14 villages.
2. The radiological laboratory is not equipped with instruments for spectrometric and radiochemical measurements. Radiometry on the RBC instrument is performed without lead shielding.

3. The necessary regulatory documents for proper radiation monitoring are lacking, in particular the new NRB and OSP (Radiation Safety Standards 76/87 and Basic Sanitary Rules 72/87).

The Chernobyl District Sanitary and Epidemiological Station does not provide services to the 30-kilometer zone. It consists of a few employees. At the time of the inspection, the chief physician was a nurse who is not very competent in radiation hygiene. The Sanitary and Epidemiological Station is equipped with primitive dose monitoring and radiometric measurement equipment.

The Environmental Protection Department, on its own initiative, is carrying out certain work in villages within the 30-kilometer zone to restore proper sanitary order and ensure safe drinking water, connecting military units stationed there at their own request.

However, the department is not equipped with the necessary radiation monitoring equipment, possessing only a DP-5a, as well as the necessary regulatory documents. The department's staff lacks sufficient knowledge in the field of dose monitoring, as well as the ability to analyse the radiation situation and provide recommendations to the public.

The agent is of the impression that there is still considerable formalism in the work of the police in the zone, namely:

1. Vehicle inspections at checkpoints exiting and entering the zone are superficial. We removed approximately 400 samples of food products, vegetables, fruits, and soil through the Zeleny Mys checkpoint in two trips, and no one asked us for an RB certificate authorising the removal. We had the certificates and they are currently in the regional SES.
2. Police officers working in the 30-km zone show little interest in who is in the 30-km zone, why, and what work these people are doing. Thus, when collecting samples in 14 settlements, no one asked us for documents authorising the work.
3. We also encountered the following facts: on one side, the "border" was locked, while on the other, agricultural work was being carried out by Belarusian collective farms (in October 1988) in the Ukrainian villages of Tereshtsy and Lodyzhichi, located in the 30-km zone. The agent asked people how they returned to their villages, and they replied that the "border" on the Belarusian side was open. They were "caught" and transported back several times, and then returned home again through Belarus.

During a sanitary survey, it was established that 1,000 people who had returned to their permanent places of residence without permission were living in 14 villages within the 30-km zone (Chernobyl).

The residents are primarily of retirement age; there is a small number of disabled children. The sanitary conditions in the villages are unsatisfactory, and the farmsteads are overgrown with weeds. There is a lack of medical care, as well as basic goods and food. Bread and milk are delivered once a week in limited quantities. Residents of these villages have complained about the lack of electricity, radio, telephone, postal service, and pension delivery. An inspection of the sanitary conditions of stores and first aid stations revealed that their sanitary conditions were satisfactory.

The results of radiation measurements are as follows:

1. During dosimetric measurements, the gamma radiation was:

- SRP 68 – 0.2-1.5 $\mu\text{Sv/hr}$ (Koshovka village)
- KRB – from 20 to 100 CPM/cm²

Measurements were taken at a distance of 1 m from the ground

b) on the surface of buildings

- SRP 68 – from 0.5 to 2.0 $\mu\text{Sv/hr}$
- KRB – from 50 to 2,500 CPM/cm² (Porynev village)

c) indoors

- SRP 68 – from 0.2 to 0.5 $\mu\text{Sv/hr}$
- KRB – from 20 to 50 CPM/cm²

d) on the surface of clothing

- SRP 68 – from 0.2 to 0.8 $\mu\text{Sv/hr}$
- KRB – from 2.0 to 300 CPM/cm²

d) footwear

- KRB – up to 5000 CPM/cm² (the boots of a resident of Lodyzhichi, Belorusskaya St., No. 44, Povybit A.G.).

We did not detect any significant excesses of gamma radiation; high levels compared to background were noted mainly on buildings (roofs), especially in the villages of Koshovka, Stechanka, Poryshev, and Ostashev.

2. According to radiometric measurements conducted by the KRK instruments, it was established that, for the most part, all fruits and vegetables do not exceed the maximum permissible levels of total beta contamination, with the exception of dried mushrooms, dried fish, and several vegetable samples, which slightly exceeded the maximum permissible levels. A total of approximately 400 measurements were conducted using the KRB instrument.

3. Samples of soil, milk, dried mushrooms, dried fish, and certain vegetables, where significant excesses of the maximum permissible levels were observed, were delivered to the radiological laboratory for spectral measurements.

The inspection report was sent to the radiological department of the regional sanitary and epidemiological station and the Chernobyl district executive committee.

Recently, during conversations with various doctors visiting Belaya Tserkov, the agent established that the situation in many previously surveyed villages remains poor.

Some minor inaccuracies may be included in the description due to the passage of time.