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NEWS RELEASE
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PLUTONIUM DOCUMENTS

The Governor's office today released a set of documents which relate to a 1971 Atomic Energy Commission program that was designed to test for Sr 90 in Utah soils. AEC scientists found in those samples a far higher plutonium count than they had anticipated. This led to a 1974 sampling on a much more thorough basis. The 1974 study determined that the levels of Pu in the Utah soils were up to 3.8 times that of anywhere else in the United States. It also indicated that the central and northern Wasatch Front areas received the heaviest deposits of this "most dangerous material known to man." The maps showing distribution of the material indicate that Ely, Nevada was an area of far higher concentration than the populous areas of Utah. Southern Utah did receive a significantly smaller amount of Pu in its soil than the areas to the North and East.

The 1974 study suggests that this Pu was deposited here in the 1957-58 series of "safety tests" at the Nevada Test Site. In these tests the bombs were not permitted to "go thermo-nuclear". Instead, the Pu in the bombs was blown to bits. Apparently at the time the AEC had stopped directi

the fallout to the northeast and had begun the Utah-Nevada border north strategy. This would account for the Pu content being lighter in Southern Utah. This document would suggest that a study that focused upon the dangers of plutonium in the soils might be useful.

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