Uranium and Radiation on the Navajo Nation

REDUCE YOUR CONTACT

Uranium is found naturally in the earth in small amounts. In some areas, the uranium is found in amounts high enough to mine, such as on the Navajo Reservation. Because of uranium mining in the past, some soil, water, rocks, and structures on the Navajo Nation have unsafe levels of uranium.

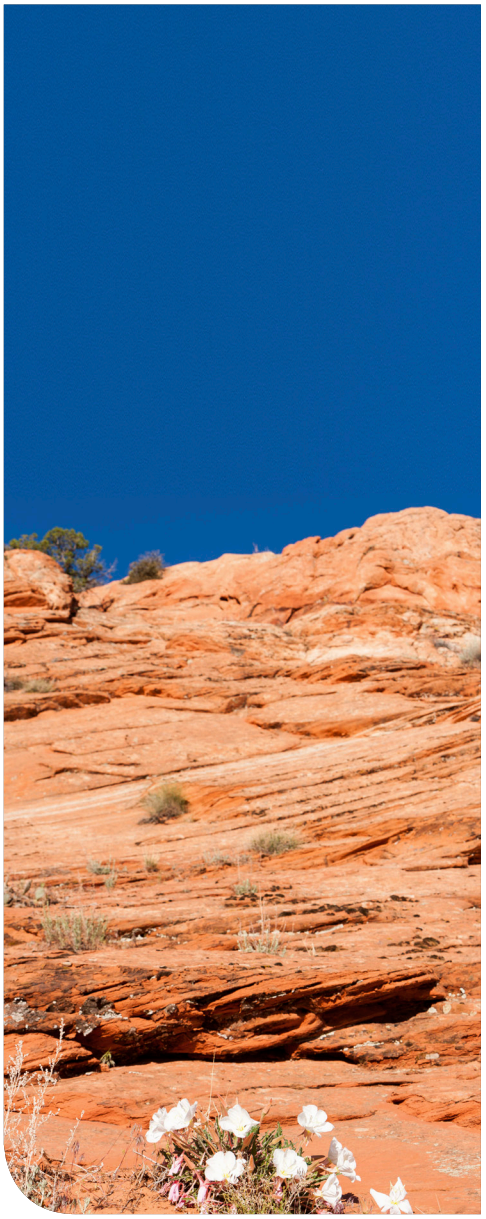
Contact with high levels of uranium can cause health problems — including kidney damage.

Radiation is a type of energy that comes from uranium and other natural materials such as radium and radon. Radiation is also found naturally in small amounts. There are unsafe levels of radiation on Navajo Nation because of past uranium mining.

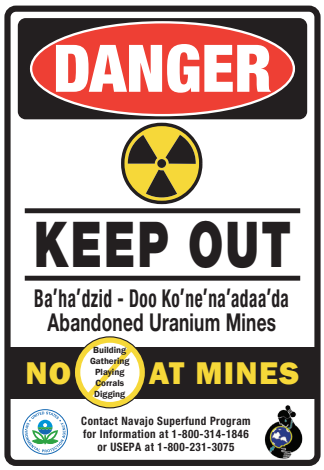
Exposure to radiation can cause health problems such as cancer if people are exposed to it in large enough amounts.

Take steps to keep yourself safe:

- ✓ **Stay away from abandoned mines and mills.**
- ✓ **Find out if your home is a contaminated structure.**
- ✓ **Use regulated water for human needs.**
- ✓ **Never use unregulated water for human needs — even if it looks ok.**
- ✓ **Use good water hauling practices to keep your water clean.**



Stay away from abandoned mines and mills.



The land around abandoned mines and mills is contaminated with uranium, and mining and milling wastes and can have high levels of radiation. You can learn locations of mines and mills from uranium awareness posters in your Chapter House and IHS clinics. Keep out of these dangerous areas.

- Never build, play, ride ATVs, or make corrals at mine sites
- Never gather plants or take gravel, dirt, sand, or water from mine sites
- Never grow plants or raise and graze livestock at or around mine sites

If you must graze livestock around mine sites, don't use or eat the liver, kidney, or bones – these are the parts of the animals that take up the most uranium when uranium is present.

If you have questions about abandoned mines, location of mines, or U.S. EPA cleanup activities, call:

- Navajo Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation: Window Rock at (928) 871-6982, Shiprock at (505) 368-1220, Tuba City at (928) 871-6982
- Navajo Nation Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Program at (800) 314-1846
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) at (800) 231-3075

Find out if your home is a contaminated structure.

Some homes and other structures were built with materials from uranium mines or mills. These materials can give off radiation and radon gas. If you are concerned that your home is made from contaminated materials the Navajo Contaminated Structures Program can help.

If you have questions about your home construction, call:

- Navajo Nation EPA Superfund Contaminated Structures Program at (800) 314-1846

Use regulated water for human needs.

Regulated water is monitored and treated to meet U.S. EPA and Navajo Nation EPA drinking water standards for uranium and other contaminants. It is safe to drink and to use for other human needs. Regulated water is:

- Piped into your home
- Located at a regulated watering point — usually near Chapter Houses

This means if you have running water in your home, use it for human needs. If you don't like how your water tastes or looks, you can try a filter.

Never use unregulated water for human needs – even if it looks ok.

Unregulated water is any water that is not piped to your home or does not come from a regulated watering point. Livestock wells are one common example of an unregulated water source that should not be used for human needs. Unregulated water isn't safe for:

- Drinking
- Cooking
- Bathing
- Washing fruits and vegetables
- Cleaning clothes

If you have questions about regulated water, call:

- Navajo Tribal Utility Authority (NTUA) at (800) 528-5011

If you have questions about unregulated water sources, call:

- Navajo Department of Water Resources at (928) 729-4003
- Navajo Public Water Systems at (928) 871-7755

Use good water hauling practices to keep your water clean.

If you haul water for human needs:

- Use only regulated watering points as a water source for people
- Use only containers and hoses approved for human drinking water
- Always clean hoses and containers before you use them
- If you haul for livestock, use separate hoses and containers for livestock water than you use for human water

If you have questions about safe water hauling, call **Navajo Public Water Systems at (928) 871-7755.**

Learn more by reading the fact sheet *Uranium and Radiation on the Navajo Nation: YOUR HEALTH*.

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