



Riverview, FL phosphogypsum stack

RADIOACTIVE ROADS: THE FACTS

EPA recently authorized the use of radioactive waste called phosphogypsum, or “PG,” in road construction. By allowing PG in roads, the public and environment will be exposed to radiation. This decision will have long lasting impacts to public health, clean air and water, and biodiversity.

WHAT IS PHOSPHOGYPSUM?

Phosphogypsum is the radioactive waste from processing phosphate ore into phosphoric acid which is predominantly used in fertilizer. See the process [here](#). **Radium-226, found in PG, has a 1,600-year radioactive decay half-life.** In addition to high concentrations of radioactive materials, PG can also contain **significant amounts of sulfur, arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, copper, fluoride, lead, and zinc.**

PG is stored in mountainous stacks called “gypstacks” hundreds of acres wide and hundreds of feet tall. More than 1 billion tons of the radioactive waste has already been stored in 25 stacks scattered throughout Florida, perched precariously atop the Floridan aquifer — which supplies drinking water for 10 million people. Additionally, gypstacks in Idaho, North Carolina, Wyoming, and notably in Louisiana, threaten nearby communities.

IS PG IN ROADS SAFE?

No. In 1992, EPA determined that the use of PG in road construction presents an **unacceptable risk to public health.** Since then, EPA has required PG be stored in stacks because **the radon it emits can cause serious harm to health, including cancer, genetic damage, and birth deformities, and because it may remain radioactive for thousands of years.** PG poses particular threats to workers constructing the roads and nearby residents.

WHAT'S NEW?

The fertilizer industry has been looking for other ways to get rid of the waste it produces to avoid the expense and liability of maintaining existing gypstacks. With a regulatory administration that places corporate profits ahead of public health, The Fertilizer Institute knew the timing was right, and asked EPA to reverse its long-standing determination that PG poses an unreasonable risk to public health.

In October 2020, the EPA reversed course and [approved](#) the use of phosphogypsum in roads.

In approving the request, EPA cut the public, regional EPA offices, and important resource management agencies like the Fish and Wildlife Service out of the process.

WHAT CAN I DO?

EPA did not consider public input in this decision and road construction can begin without notice. **Contact EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler and let him know that the public has the right to be heard.**

Email him at: wheeler.andrew@epa.gov

Or tweet: [@EPAWheeler](#) #NoRadioactiveRoads

Contact your state and federal representatives and let them know that PG is dangerous to public health, clean air and water, and biodiversity. Ask them to ensure that EPA decisions are based on science, not special interest profits.