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Acreage fields irrigated with potentially radioactive water

Posted: Sep 02, 2009 9:41 AM EDT

By Emily Pantelides - [bio](#) | [email](#)
 Posted by Rachel Leigh - [email](#)

PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL (WFLX) - It's come to light the Seminole Improvement District Water Treatment Plant is irrigating orange groves in the Acreage with potentially radioactive water.

The Department of Environmental Protection's testers found radium 226, a radioactive chemical, in water entering the Seminole water treatment plant.

During the treatment process, the radium is filtered out, but then what happens to it?

"It is used to irrigate the orange groves," stated DEP Southwest Regional Director Jack Long.

Therefore, the bad stuff comes out of the water filtration process in the Acreage, is mixed with canal water, and then used as irrigation on the orange groves.

Reporter Emily Pantelides asked, "You already know that there is radium 226 coming out of the water, so if it's being used for irrigation, we are putting radioactive waste into the ground?"

"We will have to see what effect the blending has," Long replied.

Blending meaning when the waste, or as the DEP calls it the concentrate, mixes with water from the "M Canal" in the Acreage.

Pantelides asked, "Why not just throw it away instead of reuse it?"

"You know, there is a push in Florida to conserve our water and re-use it," Long defended

Pantelides asked, "If it were being spread as irrigation on soil, would that pose a potential problem?"

Long replied, "I think, we are getting off topic where we are supposed to be; this is hypothetical."

Pantelides probes, "If it's happening, it's not hypothetical?"

A few minutes later, **the director left the room and came back with the admission that yes, indeed, the waste or concentrate from the raw drinking water at the Seminole water plant is mixed with canal water and spread on the orange groves.**

"I have to ask, "Does that concern you at all when you hear that?" Pantelides inquired.

"No, I think, we need to see what results of testing will be," he concluded.

That testing was conducted Tuesday night. The DEP is taking samples of that concentrate to find out exactly what's in it and what the levels of radium 226 are.

At this point, the DEP doesn't know if the level of radium 226 in the irrigation is above allowable levels. That test will tell us everything.

Additionally, we called the director of the Seminole water plant and sent him an e-mail asking him to respond to this story. So far, we have not heard back.

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