

Public Citizen

Stopping New Irradiation Facilities

Irradiation facilities, especially those utilizing Cobalt 60 or Cesium 137, are a threat to worker safety, community health and safety, and the environment. However, there have been successful campaigns in the past that have kept irradiation facilities from coming to their communities. If an irradiation facility is proposed for your community, there are several steps that you can take in response:

- ✚ Contact [Public Citizen](#). We can help with background information on companies, facilities and the irradiation process in general.
- ✚ Contact your city and county council members, planning and zoning commissions, and other local officials; set up meetings with them; and express your concerns about irradiation facilities and the process in general. Feel free to print and copy any of the enclosed fact sheets or pull them from our [website](#) and bring them with you. In particular, download our fact sheet, "[The Dangers of Irradiation Facilities](#)." If the official wants more detailed information, print and copy of "[Questioning Food Irradiation: A History of Research Into the Safety of Irradiated Foods](#)."

- ✚ **In the case of an electron-beam facility**

Contact state environmental officials to find out how ozone is regulated in your state, and make sure that the proposed facility fully complies with state law. Because companies will likely be required to report anticipated ozone emissions, you can use this information to raise concerns about the irradiation facility as a source of air pollution.

- ✚ **In the case of a gamma ray facility (Cobalt 60 or Cesium 137)**

Contact local and state environmental and health officials to find out how radioactive materials are regulated – specifically, whether such materials are banned from being located near residential areas, schools or other sensitive areas.

Find out whether your state is an "agreement" state with the NRC or not. In "agreement" states, the state government is responsible for ensuring the safety of the facility. In a "non-agreement" state, where the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has authority over radioactive materials and how they are used, the NRC will conduct an additional inspection and give approval for the use of the radioactive material. Continually monitor NRC approval and use any Q&A sessions, public meetings, or formal hearings that they offer to your advantage. This [website](#) lists which states are "agreement" states and tells you which state agency governs radioactive materials if it is.

Research permitting requirements and zoning regulations to find out if your board of supervisors or other elected officials have the power to grant or deny a permit to the company. If they do have the power to grant a permit, pressure them to listen to their constituents and deny the permit. If there is no standard zoning policy for radioactive materials, encourage your board to legislate to put one in place.

- ✚ Discuss the proposed facility with your neighbors, friends and any organizations with which you are affiliated. Organize public forums to discuss concerns about the proposed facility, have the forums announced in local media outlets, and invite elected officials, community leaders and irradiation company executives. Urge local media to cover the events.
- ✚ Ask local officials if the irradiation company or any of its affiliates have requested public funding of the facility. "Bond issues," for example, typically must be voted on by city and county councils; in some case these issues are subject to a public vote.

- ⚡ Contact your local newspapers, and television and radio stations to tell them about the proposed facility. Suggest that they run stories about the citizen concerns.
- ⚡ Write a letter to the editor or op-ed for your area's newspapers. We can provide you with samples. Submit the article and call back in one week if it has not been published to stress the importance of this issue and the hazards that irradiation facilities can present to your community.

Because Public Citizen does not accept funds from corporations, professional associations or government agencies, we can remain independent and follow the truth wherever it may lead. But that means we depend on the generosity of concerned citizens like you for the resources to fight on behalf of the public interest. If you would like to help us in our fight, [click here](#).