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UNC Study May Have Harmed Cold War Nuclear Researchers

By KAREY WUTKOWSKI
Assistant University Editor

UNC research conducted 50 years ago about the dangers of beryllium has landed the University on a list of Cold War nuclear weapons sites, but government officials say the study should not alarm the public.

"The amount (of beryllium) used at UNC was very small, and there's no public health hazard," said Josh Silverman, a research analyst for the U.S. Department of Energy. "But the researchers could have been exposed to the beryllium."

As part of an Dec. 7 executive order issued by President Clinton, the DOE released a list last week of 317 facilities involved in nuclear weapons production and research during the Cold War.

Clinton issued the order in an attempt to identify workers who might be eligible for compensation due to exposure-related health problems under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Act of 2000.

Silverman said UNC is listed as a beryllium vendor because of a government-classified study conducted from 1949 to 1954. The research, which was contracted by the Atomic Energy Commission, produced the report, "Radioautographic Study of Distribution and Retention of Beryllium in the Rat."

"UNC conducted a research experiment that involved beryllium, which is a highly toxic metal," Silverman said. "The experiment had to do with when rats ingest beryllium from a health standpoint. It was a study on the physi-

cal properties of beryllium."

Beryllium is a silvery-gray metallic element that is used in nuclear weapons components. Exposure to beryllium particles can cause chronic beryllium disease, which is an irreversible and possibly fatal scarring of the lungs.

While it was general knowledge in the 1950s that beryllium could be dangerous to people who were exposed to large amounts of the element, most scientists were not aware that it could be harmful for those who experienced minimal exposure, Silverman said.

"There are individuals who could have inhaled beryllium," he said. "They should get in touch with the Department of Energy."

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Deadly Exposure

The Department of Energy cited UNC as a beryllium vendor due to its government-classified beryllium research in the 1950s. The UNC researchers might be eligible for worker compensation due to their exposure to the deadly chemical.

What is beryllium?

- It is a silver-gray metallic element that naturally exists in about 30 minerals.
- These minerals are found in rocks, coal, oil, soil and volcanic dust.
- It is lighter than aluminum and stiffer than steel.

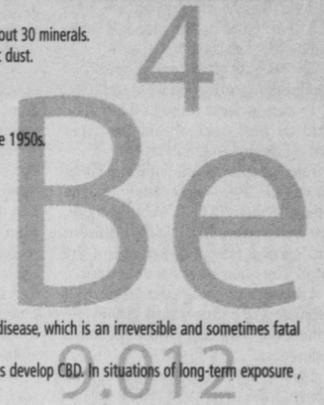
How is beryllium used?

- Beryllium metal has been used in various industries since the 1950s.
 - windshield frames
 - aircraft and space shuttle brakes
 - satellite mirrors and space telescopes
 - neutron moderator or reflector in nuclear reactors
 - x-ray windows
 - nuclear weapons components

How is beryllium dangerous?

- Exposure to beryllium particles can cause chronic beryllium disease, which is an irreversible and sometimes fatal scarring of the lungs
- About 1 to 3 percent of people exposed to beryllium particles develop CBD. In situations of long-term exposure, this number can rise to 10 to 14 percent.
- CBD is treatable through steroids but is not curable.

SOURCE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY



Searching for Solutions

By PENELOPE DEESE
Staff Writer

Neither legislators nor the govern seem to have a concrete strategy to res state from a \$486 million deficit cause marily by low tax revenue, incre Medicaid participation and the str recent legal settlements.

To reduce the deficit, legislators mi be forced to cut into the budgets of se al state agencies when they allocate fu ing for the next two years during upcoming legislative session. New p grams could be squeezed out of the bu altogether.

State officials said reducing the defi be a top agenda item when the legislat venes one week from today.

In a statement released last w President Pro Tem Marc Basnight, D- that a deficit in the Medicaid pro; increased doctor visits and a higher scriptions, could account for \$150 mion to \$160 m ion of the total shortfall.

Basnight also stated that the situation could improve or worsen as the year continues, but the budget will remain tight for several years.

"We are only halfway through the current fiscal year, so this picture could change either for the better or for the worse," the statement read. "But we know for sure that the state budget will be extremely tight not only for the rest of the fiscal year but also for the coming bien-nium."

Ruffin Poole, spokesman for Gov. Mike Easley, said he could not speculate whether Easley would target state agencies or programs to help reduce the deficit because Easley had not yet received budget requests from all state agencies.



and see where we can save money ... and possibly get extra revenue for the shortfall," he said.

Rep. Leo Daughtry, R-Johnston, also did not specify which programs might be specifically targeted to help reduce the deficit. But Daughtry said the House will analyze spending to determine areas where money could be saved.

"The way to get through it is to rearrange our priorities and make government spending more efficient," he said.

Daughtry said recurring payments - money that the state spends year after year on things such as teacher and faculty salaries - are the greatest obstacle to streamlining costs.

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State Deficit Could Affect System Budget

By SALLY FRANCIS
Staff Writer

Funding for UNC-system schools might feel the strain of the state's largest budget deficit in 10 years when the N.C. General Assembly convenes later this month to set state agency appropriations for the next two years.

The Board of Governors issued a budget request in November to then-Gov. Jim Hunt asking for \$4.7 billion in funding from the General Assembly for the 2001-02 fiscal year. The system already has \$2.5 billion of that sum in hand thanks to the bond package passed in November, leaving \$2.2 billion that it will seek from state coffers.

Newly elected Gov. Mike Easley, before granting the BOG request, will review all existing government programs and new spending proposals before sending the budget to the state legislature. "We are currently looking into examining the entire budget," said Ruffin Poole, press secretary for Easley. "We are in the process of analyzing the

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CCI Fails to Satisfy Student Expectations

By STEPHANIE HORVATH
Staff Writer

Many UNC freshmen were planning to take a Thinkpad rather than a notepad to class this year after being required by the Carolina Computing Initiative to purchase laptops.

But to the surprise of some students, CCI officials are saying a semester after the program's launch that getting instructors to integrate computers into the classroom is not CCI's objective.

"I got the impression (that we would use laptops in class) when I went to C-TOPS and we were registering for classes," said Mike Browne, a freshman from Charlotte. "My counselor said that since we all had laptops we'd be taking them to class, getting homework assignments on e-mail and getting Web assignments in class. I haven't done any of that yet."

But Marian Moore, vice chancellor for information technology, said CCI officials are not pushing instructors to work laptops into their lesson plans.

"That's the faculty's prerogative," she said. "The CCI was never about taking your laptop to class every day. It was about providing the appropriate technology to all freshmen."

Because the IBM Thinkpads are required by the University, a \$3 million fund was created to help students who could not afford computers without them. Moore said UNC provided grants for almost 1,000 computers for members of the freshman class this year alone.

Moore said CCI officials do not know exactly how many instructors are incorporating laptops into their courses. But because half of all freshmen take introductory chemistry, a class that uses laptops in its labs, she estimated that at least 50 percent of freshmen have used them in class.

"I believe the first semester we have made very good progress," Moore said. "The time to start assessing (the program's success) is not now."

Moore said the program could not be evaluated for another four years, when the initiative has been fully integrated and all students have laptops.

The initiative, which began this fall, is aimed at ensuring that all UNC students purchase laptops upon entering UNC.

But Moore also said CCI officials have no plans to track the number of courses that incorporate the new technology into class time. "If the College of Arts and Sciences would like to do that they may, but it's not our responsibility," she said.

Moore said that it is the faculty's responsibility to work the computers into their courses, but that it will be years before all instructors can feasibly use laptops in the classroom. "It takes four years to laptop this campus," Moore said. "(Instructors) can't require laptops when people don't have the appropriate technology. These things take time."

Moore said CCI is not about bringing individual technology into the classroom, but rather meeting students' advanced needs for a broader educational experience outside the classroom. "The whole point of this program is to empower faculty to do creative work by using laptops, and that seems to be happening."

She said CCI is providing students opportunities to e-mail professors, do Internet research and use word-processing programs at their own convenience.

Although there are already places on campus for students to perform these tasks, Moore said campus facilities are inadequate. "We can't put enough computers in enough classrooms for all the students," she said.

Although Moore said the program's primary emphasis is outside the classroom, some students are disappointed that the program has not met their expectations inside the classroom as well.

Katherine Didow, a freshman international relations major from Chapel

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Civil rights attorney Morris Dees pauses during his speech made in honor of Martin Luther King Jr., held Tuesday night in Memorial Hall.

Dees: Youth Must Fight Ongoing Racism

By SCOTT BRITAIN
Staff Writer

A civil rights activist raised as a poor, white farm boy in Alabama addressed racial equality to a packed house at Memorial Hall on Tuesday night.

Famed civil rights attorney Morris Dees spoke as part of the University's celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

Dees' talk included a discussion on race relations past and present, ways Americans can improve social conditions and the tolerance everyone needs to harbor.

He said that while the racial atmosphere in America has improved, some things still need to change.

"There is an ill wind blowing across our nation," Dees said. "I want to challenge students to help us. We've taken three steps forward and two steps back."

Police officers and security personnel surrounded the building and all individuals attending the event passed through a metal detector before entering.

Security was especially tight for the lecture because many organizations have strong feelings about Dees due to his litigation against various groups. Dees has filed claims against the Ku Klux Klan and the White Aryan Race for their violence against minorities, which has left many of them in bad financial situations.

Dees said hate crimes are indicative of how times are changing and cited the

murders of James Byrd and Matthew Shepard as examples of people who were killed because of their race and sexual orientation, respectively.

Last year the FBI released figures stating that there were more than 1,000 hate crimes per month committed in the United States, Dees said. Dees also said there were 450 hate Web sites, up from one site in 1995.

Dees praised King's legacy by saying he tackled anything he saw as a problem and worked to bridge the gaps between different groups. "If (King) were here today, he would still have faith that we could solve the problems that divide us," Dees said. "When he talked of building bridges, he said they should be built from acceptance, understanding, friend-

ship and love."

Dees expressed concern that students often live in the past by dealing with topics that no longer apply, instead of focusing on current topics such as health care, economic justice and homosexual rights.

He gained his unique perspective when he became an attorney and "had to go against the system" to help the poor whites and blacks he picked cotton with when he was younger. He said his original goals were not associated with civil rights law but his first clients shifted his focus.

While Dees said he does not agree with the people he puts on trial, he does not merely dismiss them. "I don't turn my

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Why does this magnificent applied science... bring us so little happiness?

Albert Einstein