Emotionally Compelling, Environmentally Unsound

By ACSH Staff — August 19, 2004

An Associate Research professor at George Washington University's Department of Environmental and Occupational Health is advising [1] other professors to show the documentary Fallon, NV: Deadly Oasis to students.

The film is touted by Physicians for Social Responsibility as an "emotionally compelling documentary that illustrates the link between environmental exposures and health."

While the documentary may indeed be an interesting way to show students how emotion can play a large role in environmental health investigations, we question whether a documentary with such an agenda is useful.

ACSH asks:

Dear Dr. Goldsmith,

What added value could there possibly be in examining a scientific issue "from the point of view of several of the sick children and their families" -- other than obscuring the science?

Certainly, the notion that victim groups are convinced that environmental factors are to blame is relevant to any discussion on this topic. However, the videotape you describe seems to suggest the link is a foregone conclusion.

No doubt, any community with a normal or increased rate of any disease, especially among children, faces untold difficulties. But to conflate this with unproven environmental villains would be without merit.


Sincerely,

Jeff Stier
Associate Director
American Council on Science and Health
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