

Without citing specific figures, although they are available, I will say that no anomalies in the natural ecological situation attributable to the testing range were discovered. The scientists' findings clearly state that the Novaya Zemlya range is not ecologically dangerous in terms of radiation.

However, there are portions of its territory with an elevated level of ionizing radiation, about one milliroentgen an hour. These are the areas where land-based tests were conducted up to 1963. They are closed, of course. No one is allowed into these sanitary zones.

On some occasions when underground nuclear tests are conducted, radionuclides of inert gases are observed escaping to the surface. But they are very few in number and do not have a serious impact on the environment.

As far as safety guarantees are concerned, I am afraid that references to the superior professional competence of our people and to careful and thorough preparation and organization of the work are not very convincing nowadays. Everyone understands that a nuclear blast is a potentially dangerous experiment. Anything can happen. But I will advance the following argument. I myself spent a total of about five years on the testing range, and my colleagues in the directorate spent 10 years or more there. Some had children who grew up there. By the way, the delivery room on the archipelago is not idle: every year 17 to 20 children are born within its walls. The test personnel's settlement has its own secondary school, swimming pool and club... I am convinced that if any sort of danger threatened people's health there, no amount of money would lure them to the place. Anyway, their salaries are not so high as that..."