

# La Quinta Middle School's cancer scare

## Parents demand answer from district on cluster controversy



Mandy Zatynski, Crystal Chatham,  
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Sue Karr (red shirt), who taught at La Quinta Middle School for 15 years, makes comments during a community information meeting held Thursday, April 26, at La Quinta Community Center regarding a possible cancer cluster at the middle school.

### MULTIMEDIA

- [La Quinta Middle School layout \(PDF 816KB\)](#)
- [Letter to DSUSD officials \(PDF 39KB\)](#)
- [PDF of PowerPoint presentation from Sam Milham \(PDF 1MB\)](#)

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN? CANCER CLUSTER

A cluster is a higher-than-expected number of cancer diagnoses in one area or within a group of people over a period of time, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A cancer cluster is more likely if all of the reported cases consist of one type of cancer - a rare type or a type that is not usually found in an age group.

### DIRTY POWER

"Dirty power" is an industry term also referred to as "electrical smog" or "electrical pollution." The high frequency transients are the "fuzz," or oscillating spikes, that occur when electricity is turned on or off very rapidly, according to information disseminated by La Quinta Middle School teachers.

Sources of this "dirty power" include computers, printers, audio equipment, florescent lights and dimmer switches.

### MICROSURGE METER

It measures "dirty power" by looking at the rate of change in the oscillating spikes. Dr. Sam Milham, a local physician-epidemiologist, and Dr. Raymond Neutra of the California Department of Health Services used the tool during their research.

Desert Sands Unified School District officials say they don't trust it. In an open letter to parents April 17, they call it "the subject of considerable controversy and scepticism in the scientific community."

## LQMS CANCER CASES

Since the school's opening in 1988 until 2006, 16 teachers were diagnosed with a total of 18 cases of cancer.

**Malignant melanoma:** 4 cases

**Other primary cancer:** 14 cases

**Total:** 18 cases

**Women:** 10 teachers (average age at diagnosis: 50.5 years)

**Men:** 6 teachers (average age at diagnosis: 47.7 years)

**Total:** 16 teachers

**Employed less than three years:** 4 cases

**Employed more than three years:** 14 cases

A community meeting Thursday night intended to inform La Quinta Middle School teachers and parents about an alleged cancer cluster at the school turned into a heated exchange with a sole district representative.

Parents and La Quinta school staff talked over each other, clamoring for answers from Desert Sands Unified School District Deputy Superintendent Charlene Whitlinger.

An epidemiologist and an electronic engineer claim a cancer cluster exists at the school - 18 cancer diagnoses have been made since the school's opening in 1988. Superintendent Doris Wilson, who was not present at the meeting, disputed the claim Wednesday.

La Quinta Middle is a school of 895 students in sixth through eighth grades with 64 adult employees, including 31 teachers.

Whitlinger said the district has spent about \$100,000 to test the air, water, soil and radioactivity in the school, and officials have come up with nothing significant.

Many of the staff and families at the La Quinta Community Center didn't buy it Thursday night.

"If something happens to my son, I'm going to come after you. You can bet that," parent Bertha Estrada yelled, pointing her finger. Her son now is at La Quinta High School. She said she is going to request to transfer her daughter to another school.

"I'm afraid. I'm very afraid," she said.

Whitlinger eventually walked out, unable to speak without interruption, amidst audience comments of "Sit down!," "Bye!" and "Don't let the door hit you on the way out."

At a news conference before the meeting, Whitlinger said that no one has yet considered the pre-existing health status of the cancer victims at La Quinta Middle, nor environmental factors, like the sun, in the Coachella Valley.

"We live in a sun belt," she said, noting her own bout with skin cancer.

Dr. Sam Milham, a part-time Indio resident and epidemiologist who worked for state health departments in Washington and New York for 40 years, said four of the 18 diagnoses are melanoma. That was the highest repeated cancer in all of the diagnoses. The rest include breast, uterine, thyroid, colon, pancreatic and ovarian cancers.

Milham and his colleague, Lloyd Morgan, a retired electrical engineer and director of the Central Brain Tumor Registry of the United States, blame the incidences of cancer on "dirty power" emitted from modern electrical equipment.

Thirteen of the 51 rooms at the school "maxed out" their meter for "dirty power." District officials question the validity of that tool.

In an open letter dated April 17 to parents and the community posted on the district's Web site, the district calls it a "subject of considerable controversy and scepticism in the scientific community."

Morgan admitted afterward that he cannot pinpoint the exact source or cause of "dirty power," which can be emitted from computers, printers, modems and other common office equipment.

The California Department of Health Services, which studied the school, should deliver a final report of its findings within the month.

"The batting average on cancer clusters is one that people would not like it to be," said Ken August, spokesman for the California Department of Health Services. "Cancer is unfortunately much more common than many people believe."

On average, one of every two men develops some form of cancer in his life, August said. One of out every three women does the same.

It often might be chance - or bad luck - when several cancers pop up in one area, he said.

"It's extremely difficult to identify a cause even if it is determined that a cancer cluster exists," August said.

For some teachers, the threat is enough.

Mary Loe, who teaches sixth-grade science at La Quinta Middle, moved her students twice this year to get away from room 304 - a space next to an electrical supply area.

In August 2006, district officials told board members they would build an electrical shield.

That never happened, Loe said.

Whitlinger said Thursday she thought room 304 was used for storage.

Loe went to the emergency room with anxiety and high blood pressure problems April 13. She said she doesn't plan to return this school year.

"I feel betrayed," she said.

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The author was Robert Becker, M.D. One of his books was called 'The Body Electric'. The other book was, 'Cross Currents. Cell-phone towers should never be positioned near a school; however, occupants in a "cluster" area must protect themselves as well. You may not know that you're in a cluster area for years, and then it's too late to reverse the damage. Prevention is the answer. The amount of "dirty" electricity in the school can be measured by a simple meter. Self-protection items are also important. To watch an excellent video on the subject, visit: <http://safetalk.emf411.com>

Posted by: **drcharlie1** on Wed May 02, 2007 2:26 am

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One other source written in the 70's or 80's that compiled all of the research on this very subject is titled

The Body Electric

It was written by an MD but sorry I don't remember it! 😞

Links studies to cancer and other neurological conditions known to occur with exposure to high or unsafe EMFs. May be out of print but still sold on E-Bay or Yahoo or other used book sources.

Posted by: **S. Adams** on Tue May 01, 2007 5:14 pm

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Cell phone towers or radio or TV broadcast towers may be partially or entirely responsible. However, "dirty electricity" has been described repeatedly by Mr Dave Stetzer of Stetzer Electric in Wisconsin. One excellent solution is the Graham-Stetzer filters, tested in schools and other institutions. Research studies are available at [stetzerelectric.com](http://stetzerelectric.com).

Cell-phone microwaves are also highly dangerous, causing DNA damage and malignant change, especially brain and eye cancers in cell phone users. Children are at greatest risk. To view the findings of reliable research and available protection, visit [www.123SafeTalk.com](http://www.123SafeTalk.com).

Charles Smithdeal, M.D.

Posted by: **drcharlie1** on Tue May 01, 2007 4:00 pm

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The source of the "dirty power" seems likely to be a nearby "Cell Tower" or "Mobile Phone Mast" as we call them in England. Cancer Clusters appear near to these towers after a while - that is the problem with microwave emissions from the towers and cell phones.

We are hearing more and more about it in the media over our side of the water. There are many schools and communities affected throughout the world. Have a look at [http://www.mastsanity.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=129&Itemid=90](http://www.mastsanity.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=129&Itemid=90)

and see if it sounds like your cancer cluster.

I have not been to La Quinta Middle School, but I expect you can look up and around to see a "Cell Tower" (or two or more). It will be the most likely cause of the Cancer Cluster.

I was sorry to hear that you have such a cluster, it is not pleasant.

Posted by: **Martin Sharp** on Mon Apr 30, 2007 8:39 am

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