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Week's news bad for our health

WEEK IN REVIEW

Federal officials reported Friday that more than 25 of every 100 persons living in Capitaland can expect to have some form of cancer and as many as nine of every 10 cancers can trace their disease to environmental factors, many man-made.

The President's Council on Environmental Quality states the incidence of cancer has more than doubled in this century and the group blames 60 to 90 per cent of the cases of the nation's second largest killer on such human-created ills as industrial pollution, poisonous chemicals in food and cigarette smoking.

Capitaland, along with most of the Northeast industrial corridor, is in the highest category of reported incidences of cancer, according to statistics compiled by the National Institute of Health which are incorporated in the President's Council report.

Dr. Warren Muir, who prepared the council report, said the cancer rate for white males is highest, since they have been smoking longer and have been in the job market longer. Women and black males have a lower rate of cancer, he said.

The report rates cigarette smoking as the largest cause of cancer, but also, the 763-page document credits "carcinogenic agents produced by man," Muir cited. Muir cited chemicals such as PCBs — polycholorinated biphenyls, dumped into the Hudson River from General Electric plants north of Albany, and DES, diethyl stildesterol, used in some types of feed for cattle — as examples.

The mortality rate is approximately 150 deaths for each 100,000 white male victims, said Muir.

The state Health Department said Friday influenza reached epidemic proportions in the United States last week, according to the national Center for Disease Control, but as of Friday Capitaland had few fatalities because of the disease.

The department reported zero deaths attributed to the flu since the start of the epidemic at the end of January, but there were at least nine deaths from pneumonia in Capitaland.

The CDC reported 875 flu-related deaths on the national level for the week ending Feb. 21, 339 above the expected number of deaths for that week. The CDC said there were 4,235 flu-related deaths reported this year.

However, the experts don't expect the epidemic to reach the serious degree it reached last year since the first cases were reported late in the season and the incidence of the disease is expected to taper off by the end of March. State Environmental Commissioner Ogden Reid Wednesday officially banned all commercial fishing in the Hudson because of what he termed as "serious" health dangers posed by toxic PCB concentrations in the water. State Health Commissioner Dr. Robert P. Whalen, in a letter accompanying Reid's order, recommended that no one eat any fish taken from the river between Fort Edward in Washington County and the Troy dam. From the dam to Manhattan, fish consumption "except for shad should be restricted to no more than one meal per week," Whalen said. The health commissioner also urged that no eels be eaten and that infants and pregnant women avoid ingesting any fish from the river.

Reid indicated Feb. 17 that he planned order such a ban. Seven persons remain hospitalized Monday at Albany Medical Center Hospital after a Sunday morning fire at 68 Morris St., Albany. The fire was believed caused by a 4-year-old boy playing with matches. Albany Fire Chief Joseph Fitzmaurice said Monday Gary Springsteen, aged 4, had been playing with matches Sunday morning. The fire blocked both exits of the building, burned for about an hour and resulted in 22 persons being injured, including five firemen.