# Two profs to head for Chernobyl

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Two University professors will travel to the site of the Chernobyl nuclear accident next week, along with newly developed computer programs, in an effort to help assess the continuing dangers of the 1986 accident.

University researchers received a $100,000 equipment grant from Apple Computers, Inc. that is making the project possible. The project, one of 19 internationally to receive Apple grants this year, aims to independently identify and confirm ongoing health and environmental risks in the soil, water supply and food chain.

John Baldwin, associate professor of planning, public policy and management and David Hulse, associate professor of landscape architecture, will head for Moscow Wednesday to spend about three weeks in the area.

Baldwin and Hulse will also help launch two information centers, including the Moscow Center for Environmental Control, to be headed by Andriy Demydenko, who is in Eugene this week.

The centers will eventually house the computers systems being taken there.

For the computer project, Baldwin and Hulse will join Russian and American colleagues to map the extent of radioactive contamination in a 200-square-mile region downwind of the damaged reactor.

Demadenyo, who lives in Kiev, about 100 kilometers from Chernobyl, said residents living in the area need to learn how to live with the problems, not necessarily be told that they should leave.

For example, people will be told if a change in their water source is necessary, if different grain should be given to their livestock or if different types of crops should be grown.

"It's impossible to resettle a 30 million population, so we have to learn how to live with this. It's not easy to change your place of living and find new work," Demadenyo said.

"We have some different approaches," he said of his American colleagues, "but the goal is the same."

That includes giving people specific information about the extent of the contamination on their property, something Hulse said the government hasn't done enough of.

The public understanding of health risks is minimal, he said, due to lack of access to verified scientific information and the central government's lack of credibility as an information source.

People living in the area will be able to locate their farm or home on a computer screen, model the behavior of the radiation on the land over time and ask the computer about the nature of present and future radiation risk. The system will provide detailed suggestions to help farmers raise uncontaminated crops.

An estimated 1.5 million people live in the areas contaminated by Chernobyl fallout. More than 300,000 people were evacuated within an 18-mile radius of the reactor. But evacuation efforts have been stymied as people have begun returning to their ancestral homes, despite warnings that radiation continues to be a threat.

The project was initiated in 1991, before the fall of the Soviet government, at the personal request of Gennady Yagodin, then minister of the Soviet State Committee on Public Education. He approached Baldwin and Hulse, while they were in Russia on an academic exchange program, about the feasibility of developing an independently managed study of radiation hazards and quickly secured funding for preliminary field work, which began last June.

Special software was developed specifically for this project by Hulse; Kit Larsen, a systems analyst at the University Computing Center; and Michael Hamilton, director of the University of California's James San Jacinto Mountain Reserve.

The study is supported by the Russian government.