

Office of Radiation Protection

Roles and Responsibilities

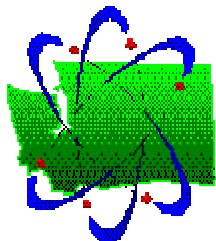
July 2002

Fact Sheet #48

Division of Environmental Health
Office of Radiation Protection



Office of Radiation Protection



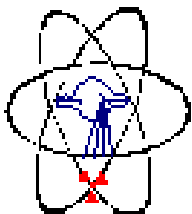
The Washington State Department of Health is the state radiation control agency. The Department's Office of Radiation Protection works to protect the public and the environment from the harmful effects of radiation. By regulating the uses of radiation and measuring radiation levels, exposure is minimized and health is protected.

RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS



Radioactive materials are used in industry, research and in the healing arts. Through an intensive regulatory and licensing process, the Radioactive Materials Section protects workers and the public from harmful exposure to these materials. Staff Health Physicists license all users of significant amounts of radioactive materials (commonly referred to as "licensees") and inspect licensed facilities to ensure that regulations and license conditions are being followed and that proper protective measures are being applied.

X-RAY



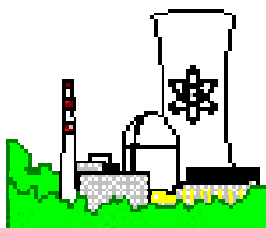
Machine generated sources of radiation are regulated by the X-Ray Section. Health Physicists help ensure the lowest possible human exposures (consistent with good diagnostic quality) from X-rays as they are used in over 5,500 medical, dental, chiropractic, veterinary, and industrial facilities. Through education, shielding review, inspections and enforcement of safe practices, operators of X-ray equipment and their patients are protected from excessive exposure to radiation. Mammography facilities are given top priority; image quality, radiation dose and quality assurance procedures are evaluated yearly. More information of interest to X-ray registrants is available.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Waste Management Section staff ensure the health and safety of workers and the public, and protection of the environment through its regulatory authority over the commercial low-level waste site, waste processors, and two uranium mills. Staff issue radioactive materials licenses to facility operators, conduct inspections, and monitor operations and radiation levels at each of these locations.



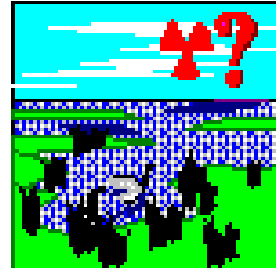
RADIOLOGICAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



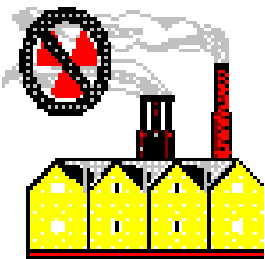
In the event of a major accident involving radiation, the Nuclear Safety Section directs the Department's response by coordinating all actions taken to protect the public from radiation exposure. Staff Health Physicists and Nuclear Engineers maintain readiness through ongoing training and drills and written plans and procedures. The Section maintains a 24-hour nuclear emergency telephone line (206-NUCLEAR) to ensure that emergency response is activated promptly at the initial notification. They ensure that, if an accident occurs, actions to protect the public are taken promptly; that farms and gardens are safe before harvesting occurs; that evacuees and emergency workers are monitored for contamination; and that recovery and reentry occur safely. Some examples of the Department's emergency response function are documented in reports on the May 1997 accident at Hanford, the April 1998 fire at Siemens Power Corporation, the 1998 Washington Joint Field Team Olympics, and the June 2000 Hanford Wildfire.

ENVIRONMENTAL RADIATION MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

The Environmental Radiation Section is charged with protecting the public and the environment from releases of radioactivity from nuclear operations in the state through an active environmental radiation monitoring program. Staff in this section measure levels of radiation in the air, water, soils and foods and publish their data in reports such as the 100-D Island Radiological Survey, The Presence of Radionuclides in Sewage Sludge and Their Effect on Human Health, and the June 2000 Hanford Wildfire. This Section coordinates, integrates and evaluates data from monitoring programs operated by government and private industry and enforces environmental radiation standards within the state. The Section's Hanford Environmental Oversight Program is responsible for evaluating any offsite impacts caused by Hanford operations and insuring onsite monitoring is adequate. Doses of radiation received in the past and present are calculated to determine health effects. In the event of accidents involving contamination with radioactive materials, the Environmental Radiation Section oversees clean-up of sites. Just released is "Hanford Guidance for Radiological Cleanup" which discusses how DOH would implement a dose-based cleanup standard when Hanford property is actually released for public use.



RADIOACTIVE AIR EMISSIONS



The Air Emissions and Defense Waste Section has a regulatory function in enforcing compliance with the federal and state Clean Air Acts for radionuclides at nuclear facilities statewide. This Section also protects public health by ensuring the safe management and clean-up of high and low-level radioactive wastes at Hanford. Staff in this Section represent the Department on issues related to the Hanford Environmental Dose Reconstruction Project and defense waste.

RADIOLOGICAL HEALTH SECTION

This section managed the development and implementation of the Hanford Individual Dose Assessment (IDA) Project through a federal grant. This service helped people learn about their exposure from past radioactive releases from the Hanford site. This project was completed on December 29, 2000. For a copy of the Hanford Individual Dose Assessment (IDA) Final Report go to the web site <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/rp/>.

