

September 3, 2003

ALL AGREEMENT STATES, MINNESOTA, PENNSYLVANIA

CANCELLATION OF 5-WEEK HEALTH PHYSICS COURSE (H-109) (STP-03- 068)

Based on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) Fiscal Year 2005 (FY 05) budget evaluation process, the NRC made a decision to no longer directly sponsor the Five-Week Applied Health Physics course beginning in FY 04 (October 1, 2003). The basis for this decision involved several factors which are discussed in further detail below. In large measure, the decision was based on limited NRC staff attendance of past courses and the availability of alternative courses which could meet NRC and State needs. There are equivalent alternative courses available to meet NRC's limited training needs, as well as Agreement States training needs for basic applied health physics; specifically the commercial course offered by Oak Ridge Institute of Science and Education (ORISE), and the recently developed Texas A&M course. The tuition and fees for the few NRC staff who might attend one of these courses would be significantly lower to the NRC than the contracted cost for 24 slots in the NRC sponsored course.

The bases for NRC's action include:

- NRC staff attendance at the course has been limited for the past 6 courses, (5 or less NRC staff). For the past 3 courses, 3 or less NRC staff attended. (For 2 of these courses, only one NRC staff member attended).
- With respect to State attendance, for the last course, 8 State staff attended. For the previous 5 courses, State attendance ranged from 14-18 attendees, with 2 courses having 18 State attendees.
- The last 6 courses were not full, resulting in a total of 24 course slots going unfilled (there were 6 unfilled slots in the last course). NRC pays for each unused slot based on the contract which calls for NRC paying for a total of 24 course attendees at each course.
- The State's response to our January 9, 2003 training survey identified only 4 State course candidates for the remainder of FY 03, and 2 course candidates for all of FY 04. This contrasts, for example with the State's response on the teletherapy and brachytherapy course where 19 and 14 State course candidates were identified respectively for FY 03 and 04.

The Organization of Agreement States (OAS) Board has inquired whether the commercial ORISE and Texas courses provide equivalent training to that provided by the discontinued NRC ORISE course. The NRC ORISE course and the commercial 5-week ORISE course are essentially identical. The State of Texas worked with Texas A&M University to develop a

course to provide Texas staff with training equivalent to that provided by the 5-week Applied Health Physics course. Texas used the NRC/OAS Training Working Group report issued in October 1997 to develop their course (see SP-97-087). This report states that "any training developed in-house by a State, contracted by a State or offered commercially would need to cover the "essential elements" for a particular subject area." The State is responsible for making a determination that a course provides the "essential elements" in any given area.

We are providing information on this change in the NRC training program, prior to putting our training list out so you can plan for this in your training program. I hope this is helpful. If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact me or the individual named below.

POINT OF CONTACT: Brenda G. Usilton
TELEPHONE: (301) 415-2348

INTERNET: BGU@NRC.GOV
FAX: (301) 415-3502

/RA/

Paul H. Lohaus, Director
Office of State and Tribal Programs

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