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"Specialists in Radiation Safety"

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27 August 2009

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

RE: Public Comment on Potential Changes to the Agency's Radiation Protection Regulations, FR Doc E9-15950, 7 July 2009

[Submitted via Regulations.gov and email to Reg4rp@nrc.gov]

As president of the Health Physics Society (HPS), I am pleased to provide comments on behalf of the HPS in response to the referenced Federal Register notice soliciting public comment regarding potential changes to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) radiation protection regulations.

The HPS is a independent nonprofit scientific organization of professionals in the field of radiation science and radiation safety. As such, the HPS is a major stakeholder in issues related to NRC radiation protection regulations.

In its position statement "Occupational Radiation-Safety Standards and Regulations are Sound, PS013-0"

(http://hps.org/documents/occupationaldose_ps013-0.pdf), the HPS states it's belief that *"occupational radiation-safety standards and regulations have been sound, and protective of radiation workers, since the mid-1950s."* The HPS agrees with the NRC's belief, expressed in the referenced Federal Register notice, that *"the current NRC regulatory framework continues to provide adequate protection of health and safety of workers, the public, and the environment."*

However, the HPS also believes there are justified reasons for changing radiation protection regulations even if the current regulations are adequately protective. In its position statement "Compatibility in Radiation-safety Regulations, PS004-1" (http://hps.org/documents/compatibility_ps004-1.pdf), the HPS states its belief that *"the current regulatory framework for establishing and*

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enforcing regulatory radiation-safety standards results in inconsistent, inefficient, and unnecessarily expensive public health protection policies regarding radiation safety.” This position is based on the inconsistency and incompatibility of radiation-safety regulations between the multiple federal and state agencies that have responsibilities for radiation-safety regulations in the United States.

Therefore, the HPS encourages the NRC to pursue potential changes to its radiation protection regulations with a primary goal that, in the end, all federal and state agencies in the United States with radiation-safety responsibilities will have identical regulations that form the fundamental radiation-safety standards and will have consistent regulations implementing these standards to accommodate differences that may exist between/among regulated activities.

Although the “compatibility position statement” is directed at compatibility within the United States, it is logical that compatibility should extend internationally. To that end, the HPS position statement recommends “*Radiation-safety standards shall be consistent with the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), . . .*” It is important to note the HPS calls for “consistency with” ICRP recommendations rather than “duplication of” ICRP recommendations.

Therefore, the HPS encourages the NRC to pursue potential changes to its radiation protection regulations with a secondary goal that, in the end, United States radiation protection regulations will be consistent with international recommendations and regulations where reasonable and feasible, considering the differences that may exist between United States and international regulated activities.

I hope the NRC finds these comments helpful. I look forward to the HPS assisting the NRC in this important initiative as it moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Howard W. Dickson".

Howard W. Dickson, CHP