

RulemakingForm3CEm Resource

From: Rachael Denny <stormdragon71@netscape.net>
Sent: Friday, August 21, 2015 1:36 PM
To: RulemakingComments Resource
Subject: [External_Sender] Docket Nos. PRM-20-28, PRM-20-29, and PRM-20-30, NRC-2015-0057

Dear Secretary,

I am writing, this time, to urge the NRC to reject the three petitions for rulemaking cited in the subject line out of hand. I am concerned that these petitions are not based on sound science.

As I understand them, these three petitions seek to drastically weaken radiation protection standards and change the NRC's regulations from the Linear No-Threshold (LNT) model endorsed by the National Academies of Sciences to a "hormesis" model, which finds favor mainly among staunch supporters of nuclear power. Indeed, the hormesis model, rather than recognizing that any dose of radiation exposure may be harmful and should be avoided if possible, turns that scientifically-documented premise on its head and argues that low doses of radiation exposure may actually be beneficial. This theory is highly controversial, to say the least.

As Harvard's Richard R. Monson, chair of the National Academies of Science (NAS)'s BEIR VII committee stated in 2006, "The scientific research base shows that there is no threshold of exposure below which low levels of ionizing radiation can be demonstrated to be harmless or beneficial." This conclusion came from the latest study that NRC and other federal agencies commissioned NAS to carry out to update radiation risk information, so NRC should not, at this time, be considering radical proposals that contradict its own update.

Further, it is the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that is charged with setting radiation protection of the public overall and its most recent update of the Blue Book (EPA 402-R-11-001, 2011), like the NRC's current standards (which are themselves, arguably, too weak), continue to be based on the LNT model. Adoption by the NRC of the "hormesis" model would put the agency in direct and unnecessary conflict with the EPA on this critical underpinning of public health and safety regulation.

As the chief of EPA's radiation section said in 2009, "Although recent radiobiological findings indicate novel damage and repair processes at low doses, LNT is supported by data from both epidemiology and radiobiology. Given the current state of the science, the consensus positions of key scientific and governmental bodies, as well as the conservatism and calculational convenience of the LNT assumption, it is unlikely that EPA will modify this approach in the near future".

If anything, the NRC should move in the opposite direction, as significant research indicates that long-term exposure to low levels of radiation may carry a greater risk of harm than the LNT model presents. It is also well established that radiation can cause health damage other than cancer, but the regulations and risk studies ignore these, and thus are inadequate in that sense. It should be noted, also, that radiation seems to be more harmful to children than to adults, and more harmful to women than to men, so that the "standard man" approach used by the NRC allows for even greater exposure levels to those who are more vulnerable.

Any changes to radiation regulations contemplated by the NRC should be in the direction of strengthening, not weakening them. Thank you.

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