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American Academy of Health Physics
American Board of Health Physics
Web site: aahp-abhp.org

Address contributions for *CHP News* and "CHP Corner" to:

GARY KEPHART CHP CIH

Work: 217-935-8881 x4211

Fax: 217-935-4279

Email: Gary_Kephart@illinova.com

STEVE RIMA CHP CSP

Work: 970-248-6787

Email: steven.rima@doegjpo.com

Academy Continues Follow-Up to Wingspread

Ron Kathren

The "Bridging Radiation Policy and Science" (BRPS) conference, cosponsored by the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP), was held 1-5 December at the Airlie House Conference Center in Warrenton, Virginia, and brought together 70 invited participants—scientific experts, policy makers, and regulators—from around the world, including several Academy members (including Dan Strom, Charlie Meinhold, current Health Physics Society [HPS] President Ray Johnson, Ken Kase, and Ron Kathren) and other prominent American health physics personages, including HPS past-presidents Marv Goldman, Bill Mills, Ken Mossman, and Gen Roessler. BRPS program chair was Sigurður Magnússon, Director of the Icelandic Radiation Protection Institute, and the international flavor of the conference was evidenced by representatives from 13 foreign nations and several international organizations who collectively provided nearly half the participants. Several countries were represented by more than one representative, and the foreign delegation included a British Member of Parliament (Andrew Miller) and a number of senior policy makers and regulators as well as scientists.

United States participants included several Department of Energy (DOE) Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretaries (Carolyn Huntoon, David Michaels, Joe Fitzgerald, and Paul Seligman, plus Martha Krebs and former Assistant Secretary Tara O'Toole); two Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) Commissioners; Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, Inc., Chairman Robert Hallisey; Peter Lyons, Science Advisor to Senator Domenici; and former United States Senator Bennett Johnston. DOE, NRC, and the Environmental Protection

Agency (EPA) were also represented by senior staff members: David Thomasson and Rick Jones (DOE), Cynthia Jones (NRC), and Stephen Page and Jerome Puskin (EPA). In addition to those named above, United States scientific participants included National Council on Radiation Protection President Charles Meinhold; American Nuclear Society President Andrew Kadak; Jim Muckerheide, Radiation Science and Health Center for Nuclear Technology; statisticians Dale Preston, RERF, and Charles Land, National Institutes of Health; and biologist Richard Setlow. The well-rounded list of participants also included representatives from industry—Jean-Claude Guais, Cogema (France), David Coulston, British Nuclear Fuels Limited (U.K.), and Lawrence Goldstein, Electric Power Research Institute Incorporated (U.S.A.) and a number of nongovernmental scientists and representatives of nongovernmental organizations.

The BRPS format was brief presentations on specific issues followed by limited discussion, then more intensive and indepth coverage of these topics in breakout sessions of about 17 participants each. The topics considered included the validity of the linear, no-threshold theory and application of collective dose. Much discussion, both in the conference and breakout sessions as well as in the corridors and in at least one case long into the night, resulted from a presentation by Roger Clarke, in which specific dose levels were tied to specific "proposed actions." (As a "teaser" in advance of the special Academy sessions [see below], 0.03 mSv was proposed as a trivial dose for which exemption of the source should be considered). Whether the system of dose limitation should be risk based at all levels or tied to background at low levels and to risk at higher levels produced much spirited discussion. A wave of excitement and much discussion was generated by the concept that no dose is Below Regulatory Concern (BRC), but that some doses are Below Regulatory Action (BRA). (Parenthetically I might add that the latter acronym engendered a bit of levity among some of the participants and flustered the facilitators.)

Basically, the BRPS conference was a successful follow-on to the 1997 Wingspread Conference which was the basis for the Academy sessions at the 1998 HPS meeting. Additional BRPS conference information is available at the HPS Web site (<http://www.hps.org>). Academy Past-President Herman Cember is planning to make the results of the BRPS deliberations available to a wider audience by making them the topic of the AAHP special session at the first American Radiation Safety Conference and Exposition (ARSCE-2000) in Denver this coming June. The Academy will be a proud sponsor of this expanded conference at ARSCE, the annual meeting of the HPS. ■