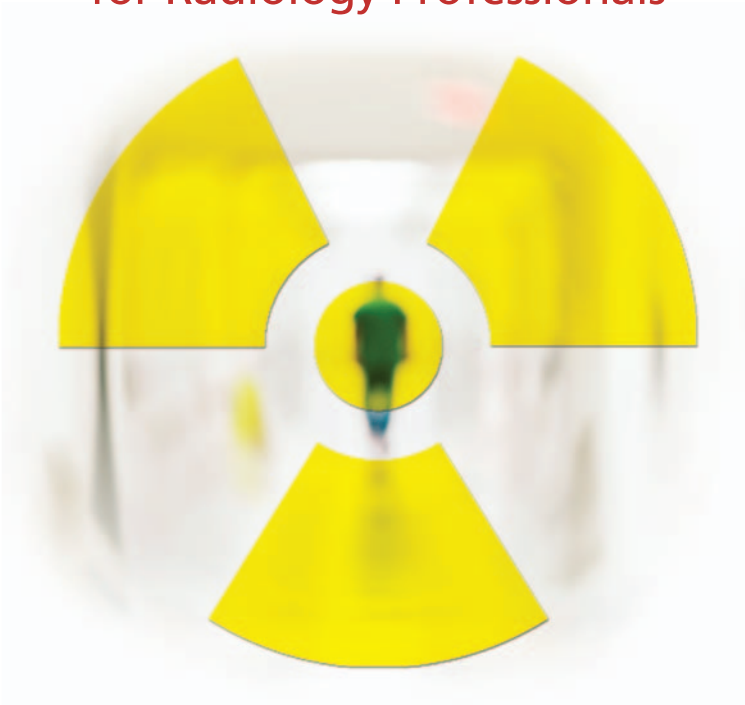


# Disaster Preparedness for Radiology Professionals



**ASTRO**  
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THERAPEUTIC  
RADIOLOGY AND ONCOLOGY

**Response to  
Radiological Terrorism**

Government Version 3.0



# Disaster Preparedness

## for Radiology Professionals

### Response to Radiological Terrorism

*A Primer for Radiologists, Radiation Oncologists  
and Medical Physicists*

Government Version 3.0

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#### **ACR Disaster Planning Task Force**

American College of Radiology ([www.acr.org](http://www.acr.org))

American Association of Physicists in Medicine ([www.aapm.org](http://www.aapm.org))

American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology ([www.astro.org](http://www.astro.org))

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## PREFACE

The American College of Radiology (ACR) Disaster Planning Task Force, in collaboration with the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology (ASTRO) and the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM), developed this primer as part of an educational program to enable the radiology community to respond effectively to a terrorist attack.

As we learned on September 11, 2001, a large-scale disaster can strike without warning. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and several incidents of anthrax in the mail placed our colleagues on the front lines in New York, Washington, D.C., and other venues, triaging the injured and diagnosing those infected with biological agents. Government officials have issued warnings about the possible use of radiological and chemical weapons in future attacks.

A radiation disaster is a possibility for which we must be prepared. Radiologists, radiation oncologists, and medical physicists will play a vital role as responders and as sources of accurate information for patients, the public, and the medical community.

This primer is not intended to serve as a comprehensive treatment guide, but rather as a quick reference in the event of a radiation disaster. It summarizes current information on preparing for a radiation emergency, handling contaminated persons, dose assessment, and radiation exposure health effects. It also includes information on radiological findings related to agents of biological and chemical terrorism because radiologists, radiation oncologists, and medical physicists may be involved in the diagnosis of conditions associated with such exposures. This edition includes a new section discussing special considerations for pediatric patients, as well. Readers are encouraged to utilize the references listed at the end to develop more in-depth knowledge.

The College will continue to expand its educational resources for disaster preparedness and will provide updates as new materials are added. Please check the ACR Web site regularly for information and updates ([www.acr.org](http://www.acr.org)).

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Over the past three years, we have continued to update this primer to reflect the latest expert guidance on radiological disaster preparedness. I would like to thank Dr Harvey L. Neiman, executive director of the ACR, for his ongoing commitment to this project, and pay tribute to the efforts of my fellow task force members: Drs E. Stephen Amis, Jr, Harris L. Cohen, John D. Earle, Douglas W. Fellows, Fred A. Mettler, and Richard L. Morin. I am also grateful to the ACR government relations staff for their assistance to the task force and their work in focusing congressional attention on radiological terrorist threats. Finally, I would like to recognize the exceptional efforts of Dr Arlene H. Olkin and Gloria Romanelli, Esq, who devoted many hours to working with the task force and organizing and editing this primer.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arl Van Moore, Jr.", with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

**Arl Van Moore, Jr, MD, FACR**  
*Chair, ACR Disaster Planning Task Force*

**Preparing for radiological terrorism means planning in advance so as to act appropriately.**

**In the event of a terrorist disaster, you and your facility will be required to carry out these “10 basics of response.”**

1. Assure medical staff that when an incident combines radiation exposure with physical injury, initial actions must focus on treating the injuries and stabilizing the patient. *See Sections VI and VII.*
2. You or your hospital must be prepared to manage large numbers of frightened, concerned people who may overwhelm your treatment facility. *See Section VII.*
3. You or your hospital must have a plan for distinguishing between patients needing hospital care and those who can go to an off-site facility. *See Sections VII and VIII.*
4. You or your hospital must know how to set up an area for treating radiation incident victims in an emergency room. *See Section V and Appendix C.*
5. You or your hospital should be aware that a good way to approach decontaminating a radioactively contaminated individual is to act as if he or she had been contaminated with raw sewage. *See Section X.*
6. You or your hospital must know how to avoid spreading radioactive contamination by using a double sheet and stretcher method for transporting contaminated patients from the ambulance to the emergency treatment area. *See Section V.*
7. You must know how to recognize and treat a patient who has been exposed to significant levels of radiation. *See Sections VIII, IX, and X.*
8. You should recognize the radiological findings of illness/injury caused by biological or chemical terrorist agents. *See Table 10.*
9. You should know what agencies or organizations to contact in the event of a radiation emergency and how to reach them. *See Federal and State Emergency Contacts Section.*
10. You or your hospital must have a plan to evaluate and counsel noninjured patients exposed to radiation at a location outside of the hospital. *See Section VII.*

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# MEDICAL GUIDELINES

## Ionizing Radiation and Terrorist Incidents: Important Points for the Patient and You

**(Reprinted from Department of Homeland Security Working Group on Radiological Dispersal Device (RDD) Preparedness: Medical Preparedness and Response Sub-Group (5/1/03 Version))**

1. All patients should be medically stabilized from their traumatic injuries before radiation injuries are considered. Patients are then evaluated for either *external radiation exposure* or *radioactive contamination*.
2. An external radiation source with enough intensity and energy can cause tissue damage (eg, skin burns or marrow depression). This exposure from a source outside the person does not make the person radioactive. Even such lethally exposed patients are no hazard to medical staff.
3. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and skin erythema within four hours may indicate very high (but treatable) external radiation exposures. Such patients will show obvious lymphopenia within 8-24 hours. Evaluate with serial CBCs. Primary systems involved will be skin, intestinal tract, and bone marrow. Treatment is supportive with fluids, antibiotics, and transfusions stimulating factors. If there are early CNS findings of unexplained hypotension, survival is unlikely.
4. Radioactive material may have been deposited on or in the person (contamination). More than 90% of surface radioactive contamination is removed by removal of the clothing. Most remaining contamination will be on exposed skin and is effectively removed with soap, warm water, and a washcloth. Do not damage skin by scrubbing.
5. Protect yourself from radioactive contamination by observing standard precautions, including protective clothing, gloves, and a mask.
6. Radioactive contamination in wound or burns should be handled as if it were simple dirt. If an unknown metallic object is encountered, it should only be handled with instruments such as forceps and should be placed in a protected or shielded area.
7. In a terrorist incident, there may be continuing exposure of the public that is essential to evaluate. Initially suggest sheltering and a change of clothing or showering. Evacuation may be necessary. Administration of potassium iodine (KI) is only indicated when there has been release of radioiodine.

8. When there is any type of radiation incident many persons will want to know whether they have been exposed or are contaminated. Provisions need to be made to potentially deal with thousands of such persons.
9. Radiation doses to people are expressed in gray (Gy) or sieverts (Sv). The older units for these are rad and rem. 1 gray = 100 rad and 1 Sv = 100 rem. An approximation of the relative hazard is given:

| Dose   | Relative Hazard  |
|--|--|
| About 10 milligray or 10 millisievert [1 rad or rem] or less | No acute effects and only a very small chance of subsequent cancer                   |
| About 0.1 gray or 0.1 sievert [10 rad or rem]                | No acute effects, subsequent additional risk of cancer about 0.5%                    |
| About 1 gray or 1 sievert [100 rad or rem]                   | Nausea, vomiting possible, mild bone marrow depression, subsequent risk of cancer 5% |
| Greater than 2 gray or sievert [200 rad or rem]              | Definite nausea, vomiting, medical evaluation and treatment required                 |

The amount of radioactivity (contamination) is measured in units of bequerels (Bq) (1 disintegration per second). Sometimes, it is expressed in counts per minute. Decontamination is usually stopped if the item is reduced to two times the background count rate or if repeated decontamination efforts are ineffective.

10. The principle of *time/distance/shielding* is key. Even in treatment of Chernobyl workers, doses to the medical staff were about 10 milligray or 10 millisievert. Doses to first responders at the scene, however, can be much higher and appropriate dose rate meters must be available for evaluation. Radiation dose is reduced by reducing time spent in the radiation area (moderately effective), increasing distance from a radiation source (very effective), or using metal or concrete shielding (less practical).

## NAMES AND SYMBOLS OF SELECTED NUCLIDES

|             |    |            |    |
|-------------|----|------------|----|
| Americium   | Am | Nitrogen   | N  |
| Argon       | Ar | Palladium  | Pd |
| Bromine     | Br | Phosphorus | P  |
| Californium | Cf | Plutonium  | Pu |
| Carbon      | C  | Potassium  | K  |
| Cerium      | Ce | Promethium | Pm |
| Cesium      | Cs | Radium     | Ra |
| Chlorine    | Cl | Radon      | Rn |
| Chromium    | Cr | Rubidium   | Rb |
| Cobalt      | Co | Scandium   | Sc |
| Gold        | Au | Silver     | Ag |
| Hydrogen    | H  | Strontium  | Sr |
| Iodine      | I  | Sulfur     | S  |
| Iridium     | Ir | Technetium | Tc |
| Iron        | Fe | Thorium    | Th |
| Krypton     | Kr | Thulium    | Tm |
| Lanthanum   | La | Uranium    | U  |
| Lead        | Pb | Xenon      | Xe |
| Magnesium   | Mg | Ytterbium  | Yb |
| Manganese   | Mn | Zinc       | Zn |
| Nickel      | Ni |            |    |

# RADIATION INCIDENTS

## I. Radiation Threat Scenarios

Medical providers must be prepared to adequately treat injuries complicated by ionizing radiation exposure and radioactive contamination. Nuclear detonation and other high-dose radiation situations are the most critical (but less likely) events as they result in acute high-dose radiation. The following scenarios are adapted from *Medical Management of Radiological Casualties Handbook* (Jarrett, 1999).

Acute high-dose radiation occurs in three principal situations:

- A nuclear detonation which produces extremely high dose rates from radiation during the initial 60 seconds (prompt radiation) and then from the fission products in the fallout area near ground zero.
- A nuclear reaction which results if high-grade nuclear material were allowed to form a critical mass (“criticality”) and release large amounts of gamma and neutron radiation without a nuclear explosion.
- A radioactive release from a radiation dispersal device (RDD)\* made from highly radioactive material such as cobalt-60 which can result in a dose sufficient to cause acute radiation injury.

## II. Exploitable Sources of Radioactive Contamination

A terrorist could obtain radioactive material from one of several different sources. The following summary is adapted from US Army Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine Technical Guide 238, *Identification of Radiological Sources of Potential Exposure and/or Contamination* (Falo, Reyes, and Scott, 1999).

### A. Radiation Sources and Contaminants Found in Nature

These sources form a part of our natural environment and their presence may be unavoidable. When they occur in large concentrations or have been concentrated for use, they may pose a threat to humans and appropriate precautions should be taken. [Examples of isotopes involved are  $^{220}\text{Rn}$  and its daughters,  $^{40}\text{K}$ , isotopes of uranium ( $^{234}\text{U}$ ,  $^{235}\text{U}$ , and  $^{238}\text{U}$ ), and  $^{232}\text{Th}$ .]

---

\* An RDD is any dispersal device causing purposeful dissemination of radioactive material across an area without a nuclear detonation. A terrorist or combatant with conventional weapons and access to radionuclides from sources such as a nuclear waste processor, nuclear power plant, university research facility, medical radiotherapy clinic, or industrial complex can develop an RDD. This type of weapon causes conventional casualties to become contaminated with radionuclides and would complicate medical evacuation from the area. Damaged industrial radiography units and old reactor fuel rods can also cause significant local radiation hazards (Jarrett, 1999).

## B. Radiation Sources Related to the Nuclear Fuel Cycle

This includes the six processes in the nuclear fuel cycle:

1. Mining and milling ( $^{235}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{238}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and its daughters)
2. Conversion ( $^{235}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{238}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and its daughters)
3. Enrichment (enriched  $^{235}\text{U}$  product, depleted  $^{238}\text{U}$  waste)
4. Fuel fabrication ( $^{235}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{238}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and its daughters, and isotopes of plutonium)
5. Products from reactor operations (same as above step plus fission products: Gases [ $^3\text{H}$ , isotopes of krypton, isotopes of xenon], solids [ $^{88}\text{Rb}$ , isotopes of strontium, isotopes of iodine (including  $^{131}\text{I}$ ), isotopes of cesium] plus neutron activation products (in reactors components):  $^{51}\text{Cr}$ , nitrogen, cobalt, and magnesium isotopes,  $^{41}\text{Ar}$ )
6. Nuclear waste ( $^{235}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{238}\text{U}$  and its daughters,  $^{222}\text{Rn}$  and its daughters, and isotopes of plutonium, most of above fission byproducts with longer half-lives)

## C. Radiation Sources Used in Medical Diagnosis and Therapy

These include primarily isotopes used in nuclear medicine diagnostic imaging and therapy ( $^{99\text{m}}\text{Tc}$ ,  $^{123}\text{I}$ ), isotopes used by oncologic radiology for therapy ( $^{60}\text{Co}$ ,  $^{137}\text{Cs}$ ,  $^{192}\text{Ir}$ ,  $^{131}\text{I}$ ,  $^{125}\text{I}$ ,  $^{226}\text{Ra}$ ,  $^{32}\text{P}$ , and  $^{103}\text{Pd}$ ) as well as radioisotopes used in biomedical research ( $^{125}\text{I}$ ,  $^{32}\text{P}$ ,  $^3\text{H}$ ,  $^{35}\text{S}$ ,  $^{14}\text{C}$ ). All could be potential ingredients in a radiation dispersion weapon.

## D. Radiation Sources Present in Military Equipment

Radioactive components are in army commodities and weapons systems:  $^3\text{H}$  (in aiming components for M1 Series tanks, Howitzer artillery pieces, mortars, M16A1 rifles, and M11 pistols),  $^{63}\text{Ni}$  (chemical agent monitor),  $^{137}\text{Cs}$  (soil density testing),  $^{147}\text{Pm}$  (M72 Light Anti-tank Weapon),  $^{226}\text{Ra}$  (gauges and instrumentation),  $^{232}\text{Th}$  (portable gas lanterns/ANVDR-2 and AN/VDR-77 radiac meters, Depleted Uranium (DU) (projectile rounds and weapon systems), and  $^{241}\text{Am}$  (M43A1 Chemical Agent Detector/MC-1 Density and Moisture tester). Nuclear-powered submarines and aircraft carriers are also sources.

Other military commodities contain radioactive components, including:

$^3\text{H}$  (watches, weapons sites, telescopes, pistols, rifles)

$^{63}\text{Ni}$  (chemical agent monitor)

$^{137}\text{Cs}$  (soil testing)

$^{147}\text{Pm}$  (luminous paint)

$^{226}\text{Ra}$  (older equipment gauges)

$^{232}\text{Th}$  (radiac meter)

Depleted Uranium (Abrams tank, Marine Corps Harrier jet, Air Force A-10 aircraft, Bradley fighting vehicle)

$^{241}\text{Am}$  (M43A1 Chemical Agent Detector)

## **E. Radiation Sources Used in Industry**

### *Naturally Occurring Radioisotopes*

$^3\text{H}$  (studying sewage and ground water)

$^{14}\text{C}$  (measuring age of water)

$^{36}\text{Cl}$  (measuring sources of chloride and the age of water)

$^{210}\text{Pb}$  (dating layers of soil and sand)

### *Artificially Produced Radioisotopes*

$^{46}\text{Sc}$ ,  $^{110}\text{mAg}$ ,  $^{60}\text{Co}$ ,  $^{140}\text{La}$ ,  $^{198}\text{Au}$  (blast furnaces)

$^{51}\text{Cr}$ ,  $^{198}\text{Au}$ ,  $^{192}\text{Ir}$  (studying coastal erosion)

$^{54}\text{Mn}$ ,  $^{65}\text{Zn}$  (predicting behavior of heavy metal components in mining)

$^{57}\text{Co}$ ,  $^{57}\text{Fe}$  (soil analysis)

$^{60}\text{Co}$  (food irradiation, industrial radiography, gamma sterilization)

$^{82}\text{Br}$  (hydrological tracing)

$^{85}\text{Kr}$  (reservoir engineering)

$^{90}\text{Sr}$ ,  $^{144}\text{Ce}$ ,  $^{147}\text{Pm}$  (radiation gauges, automatic weighing equipment)

$^{99\text{m}}\text{Tc}$ ,  $^{198}\text{Au}$  (tracing sewage and liquid waste movements)

$^{137}\text{Cs}$  (industrial radiography, radiation gauges, automatic weighing equipment, food irradiators, tracing soil erosion and deposition)

$^{169}\text{Yb}$ ,  $^{170}\text{Tm}$ ,  $^{192}\text{Ir}$  (industrial radiography)

$^{239}\text{Pu}$ ,  $^{241}\text{Am}$ ,  $^{252}\text{Cf}$  (borehole logging)

$^{241}\text{Am}$  (smoke detectors)

## **F. Radioactive Equipment and Materials Which May Require Transportation**

X-ray machinery (radiography units, electron microscopes, spectroscopy equipment, diffractometer equipment)

Industrial accelerators

Packages containing radioactive materials, transported nuclear fuel, and contaminated and spent fuel from nuclear power plants (*see section B*)

Radioactive waste (waste materials from industrial and biomedical practices—*see section C*)

## **III. Types of Radiation Incidents/Accidents**

The following is adapted from a chapter in *Medical Management of Radiation Accidents, 2nd Edition* (Gusev et al, 2001, pp 9-10).

Radiation accidents can arise from problems with nuclear reactors, industrial sources, and medical sources. The existence of these accident potentials has been present for many years. Our society has developed safeguards to significantly reduce the likelihood of an accident to very low levels. Events of the past few years highlighted by the World Trade Center and Pentagon catastrophes place another risk on the table. That new risk is the intentional nonaccidental radiation catastrophe produced by an act of terrorism.

Although there are some differences between various types of incident sources, there are elements common to all of them. Regardless of where the incident occurs, there are two general categories of radiation incidents: external exposure, which is irradiation from a source distant or in close proximity to the body; and contamination, defined as unwanted radioactive material in or on the body. The types may occur in combination.

Almost all industrial accidents, most reactor accidents, and many medical accidents result in irradiation of the victim. There does not have to be direct contact between the victim and the radiation source, which may be a radiation-producing machine or a radioactive source. Once the person has been removed from the source of radiation, or the machine has been turned off, the irradiation ceases. The victim is not a secondary source of radiation and individuals providing support and treatment are in no danger of receiving radiation from the victim. A person exposed to external irradiation does not become radioactive and poses no hazard to nearby individuals.

External irradiation can be divided into whole-body exposures or local exposures. In either case, the effective dose can be calculated, as discussed below, taking into account the attenuation of the body and the steep gradients of absorbed dose throughout the body.



Contamination, the second category of exposure, results in an entirely different approach to the care and treatment of victims. Contamination may be in the form of radioactive gases, liquids, or particles. Caregivers and support personnel must be careful not to spread the contamination to uncontaminated parts of the victim's body, themselves, or the surrounding area. Internal contamination can result from inhalation, ingestion, direct absorption through the skin, or penetration of radioactive materials through open wounds (Gusev et al, 2001).

To summarize (Table 1), radiation injuries result from either External Exposure or Contamination.

**Table 1: Classification of Radiation Injuries**

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>External Exposure:</b> | Partial and Whole Body (TBI)*                              |
| <b>Contamination:</b>     | External and Internal                                      |
| <b>Combined:</b>          | Exposed with contamination<br>Above with trauma or illness |

\*TBI: Total Body Irradiation  
(Linnemann, 2001)

#### IV. Quantities and Units - Definitions

**Exposure:** A quantity used to indicate the amount of ionization in air produced by X- or gamma-ray radiation. The unit is the roentgen (R). For practical purposes, 1 roentgen is comparable to 1 rad or 1 rem for X- and gamma radiation. The SI (Système International d'Unités, or international system of units) unit of exposure is the coulomb per kilogram (C/kg).  
 $1 \text{ R} = 2.58 \times 10^{-4} \text{ C/kg of air. [REAC/TS Web site]}$

Available at: <http://www.orau.gov/reacts/definitions.htm>.

**Dose:** A general term for the quantity of radiation or energy absorbed. The unit of dose is the gray (Gy). An older unit still used in the literature is the rad (radiation absorbed dose).  $1 \text{ Gy} = 100 \text{ rad}$ .

**Dose Rate:** The dose of radiation per unit of time.

**Free-in-Air Dose:** The radiation measured in air at any one specific point in space. Free-in-air dose is very easy to measure with current field instruments, and more meaningful doses, such as midline tissue dose or dose to the blood-forming organs, may be estimated by approximation. Military tactical dosimeters measure free-in-air doses (Jarrett, 1999).

**Equivalent Dose:** Different radiations have different biological effects as their energy is absorbed in tissue. For example, as a result of energy deposition differences, 1 Gy of alpha radiation produces much more severe

reactions than 1 Gy of X- or gamma radiation. This difference is adjusted by a quality factor (QF). The absorbed dose in rads times the QF yields the rem (radiation equivalent, man). The international unit for this radiation equivalency is the sievert (Sv) and is appropriately utilized when estimating long-term risk of radiation injury. Since the quality factor (QF) for X-ray or gamma radiation equals 1, then for pure gamma radiation:

$$100 \text{ rad} = 100\text{cGy} = 1000\text{mGy} = 1\text{Gy} = 1 \text{ Sv} = 100 \text{ rem (Jarrett, 1999)}.$$

An accident that results in a whole-body exposure of 4 Sv is very serious, perhaps life-threatening. An accident resulting in a dose of 4 Sv only to the hand is serious, but not life-threatening.

**Effective Dose:** Effective dose (ED) is a quantity derived by the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP). ED must be calculated. It cannot be measured. It is calculated by multiplying actual organ doses by *weighting factors* which indicate each organ's relative sensitivity to radiation, and adding up the total of all the numbers—the sum of the products is the *effective whole-body dose* or simply, *effective dose*. These weighting factors are designed so that the effective dose represents the dose that the total body could receive (uniformly) that would yield the same long-term risk as various organs getting different doses (Stabin, 2001).

The unit of ED is the sievert, with the older unit, the rem, still in use.

**Principles of Dose Reduction:** The three factors of radiation dose reduction are time, distance, and shielding. Reduction of radiation exposure comes about by reducing the time of exposure and increasing the distance of the exposed patient from the radiation source and the amount of shielding between the source and the individual (Gusev et al, 2001).

**Recommendations regarding treatment of exposed patients can be found in Appendix A.**

## V. Hospital Response

A hospital should initiate its emergency radiological response upon notification of an incident (see Appendix B, Radiation Accident Hospital Response). Designated personnel should immediately report to the individual in charge of the facility's radiation protection program. Ambulance personnel should be notified which entrance has been designated for receipt of radiological casualties for transport to the emergency room. Nonskid plastic sheeting can be placed as needed down the corridors where ambulance stretchers are wheeled to the ER. If injuries are not serious, the patient may be wrapped in clean sheets and transferred from the ambulance stretcher to a clean stretcher and then down the usual corridors with the contamination contained within the wrappings (NCRP 138, 2001).

By using a double sheet, contaminated clothing can be cut off and removed by rolling the patient from one side to the other to free the clothing. Clothing is wrapped in the inner sheet and removed to a plastic bag. The outer sheet remains around the patient (Gusev, 2001).

**Recommendations for the floor plan of a radiation emergency area are contained in Appendix C.** (For a detailed description, refer to Gusev, 2001, pp 427-28.)

## **VI. Order of Management and Treatment of Radiological Casualties**

1. Treat and stabilize life-threatening injuries.
2. Prevent/minimize internal contamination.
3. Assess external contamination and decontamination.
4. Contain contamination to treatment area.
5. Minimize external contamination to medical personnel.
6. Assess internal contamination (concurrent with above).
7. Assess local radiation injuries/burns.
8. Follow up patients with significant whole-body irradiation or internal contamination.
9. Counsel patient and family about potential long-term risks/effects. (Linnemann, 2001; NCRP 138, 2001)

**Radioactive contamination, internal or external, is rarely immediately life-threatening and, therefore, treatment of significant medical conditions should always take precedence over radiological assessment or decontamination of the patient.**

## **VII. Medical Management**

### **Adult**

Radiological casualties may include patients who have received a significant whole-body exposure and patients who have inhaled radioactive materials or who have wounds contaminated with radioactive materials.

### **Triage on the Scene** (adapted from NCRP 138, 2001)

Treatment of life-threatening injuries always takes precedence over measures to address radioactive contamination or exposure.

Contamination of a patient can be determined in the field, on the way to a medical facility, or at the hospital. Patients who have received large absorbed

doses may have symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and weakness. These are also symptoms of exposure to many toxic materials and, sometimes, psychological stress. Patients who have no evidence of external contamination, but are likely to have internal contamination due to a wound, inhalation, or ingestion of radioactive materials, may be treated in routine emergency rooms. Blood, vomitus, urine, or feces may be contaminated and should be handled using the procedures for contaminated materials.

Patients with large amounts of external or internal radioactive contamination must be given special attention because of the potential of exposure hazard to treatment personnel. Such contamination could occur from a detonation at a nuclear plant, the explosion of an RDD, or a nuclear weapon detonation.

Individuals who are only externally contaminated, but not injured, should be decontaminated at a facility other than a hospital to conserve hospital resources for the injured (NCRP 138, 2001). Hospitals and other acute care treatment facilities treating patients on a walk-in basis should have plans in place for evaluating large numbers of the public for radioactive contamination. The plan must include several personnel with monitoring equipment who can make evaluations, keep appropriate records, and still leave the emergency room free to handle severely injured patients (Mettler, 2001).

### **Pediatric**

Historically disaster preparedness has not focused on the special needs and concerns of children. In May of 2003 the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) convened experts from the multiple disciplines involved in the planning for and care of children during times of disaster and terrorist events. The following information is summarized from the results of this workshop (NCDP, 2003).

### **Special Pediatric Considerations in Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness**

- Children are more vulnerable to chemical agents that are absorbed through the skin or inhaled.
- Children have special susceptibilities to dehydration and shock from biological agents.
- Children cannot be decontaminated in adult decontamination units.
- Children require different dosages or different antidotes to many agents.
- Children have unique psychological vulnerabilities, and special management plans are needed in the event of mass casualties and evacuation.

- Emergency responders, medical professionals, and children’s health care institutions require special expertise and training to ensure optimal care of those exposed to chemical, biological, or radiological agents.
- Children’s developmental ability and cognitive levels may impede their ability to escape danger.
- Emergency medical services personnel, medical and hospital staff may not have pediatric training, equipment, or facilities available.

As in any emergency preparedness situation, the first responders are key to the success of the response. Although triage methods employed at the scene can make a difference in any disaster, they are most critical when children are involved. In order for first responders to react in a timely and appropriate fashion when dealing with terrorist events, it is important that the following minimum elements for proper triage and prehospital care of children be implemented by first responders.

**Triage**

- Incorporate use of a pediatric-specific triage system by all first responders and hospital personnel. At this time, JumpSTART Pediatric Multiple Casualty Incident Triage is the only objective triage system that addresses the needs of children. Use of this system will help first responders make potential life and death decisions which may be influenced by emotional issues when triaging children.
- Pediatric triage systems should address primary, secondary and tertiary triage and address all aspects of disaster triage, including psychological triage, triage for weapons of mass destruction, and triage for children with special health care needs.

**Prehospital Care**

- Equip emergency medical services personnel and response vehicles with pediatric-specific equipment and medications. This should include supplies for decontamination and assessment/treatment for biologic, chemical, and radiological terrorism.

**The following recommendations should be considered in events involving radiologic terrorism**

- Ensure availability of appropriate marrow stimulative agents for children who may be victims of radiologic terrorism or radiologic exposure through nonterrorist events. The marrow stimulative agents available and their dosages are listed in Table 2.
- Include in all medication availability for radiologic exposure antiemetics to treat emesis caused by this exposure and prevent

dehydration for which children have increased susceptibility.

- Design decontamination systems so that they can be used for decontamination of children of all ages (including infants), the parentless child, the nonambulatory child, and the child with special health care needs.

**Table 2: Marrow Stimulative Agents for Pediatrics**

| Agent   | Action                                   | Dosage <sup>b</sup>   |
|---|--|---|
| Epoetin Alpha <sup>a</sup><br>(Epogen, Procrit) | Induces erythropoiesis                   | 150 units/kg/dose   |
| Filgrastim<br>(Neupogen)                        | Granulocyte Colony<br>Stimulating Factor | 2.5–5 mcg/kg/day<br>(dosages of 20 mcg/kg/day<br>may be needed in<br>selected patients) |
| Sargramostim<br>(Leukine)                       | Colony<br>Stimulating Factor<br>(AMCSF)  | 5–10 mcg/kg/day<br>(dosages of 30 mcg/kg/day<br>may be needed in<br>select patients)    |

<sup>a</sup>Epoetin Alpha may also be useful to reduce overall requirements for blood transfusion in any mass casualty incident.

<sup>b</sup>Dosage derived from Medical Management of Radiologic Casualties, Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute, 1999 and accepted dosages for pediatric oncology and pediatric congenital neutropenia patients.

**Reference:** *Pediatric Preparedness for Disasters and Terrorism – A National Consensus Conference.* New York: National Center for Disaster Preparedness; 2003.

## VIII. Patient Radiological Assessment

Patient management will depend on dosimetry, if available, and observed tissue response. Refer to Table 3 (Local Skin Absorbed Doses) and Table 4 (Total Body External Doses). When film badges, thermoluminescent dosimeters, or other personal dosimeters are available they will support or provide dose data. When there are lower absorbed doses, there will be fewer biological findings. Personal dosimeters, accident reconstruction, and history are important factors in determining levels of exposure (Linnemann, 2001).

**Table 3: Local Skin Absorbed Doses\***

(adapted from Linnemann, 2001)

| Condition        | mrem        | mSv    | rem   | Sv |
|------------------|-------------|--------|-------|----|
| Erythema         | 600,000     | 6,000  | 600   | 6  |
| Dry Desquamation | 1 million   | 10,000 | 1,000 | 10 |
| Ulceration       | 2 million   | 20,000 | 2,000 | 20 |
| Radiodermatitis  | 2.5 million | 25,000 | 2,500 | 25 |
| Epilation        | 300,000     | 3,000  | 300   | 3  |

\*These dose-effect relationships are good approximations but can vary from individual to individual. They are energy dependent.

Epilation occurs 10 to 20 days post-exposure.

The following is adapted from *Management of Terrorist Events Involving Radioactive Material* (NCRP 138, 2001).

A radiological assessment should be performed by an individual with radiological health training (eg, a medical physicist), under supervision of medical personnel. This assessment includes radiation measurements and collection of information relevant to the decontamination and treatment of the patient. The instrument used to perform the survey should be sensitive to both penetrating and nonpenetrating radiation (eg, a Geiger-Mueller tube with a thin wall or entrance window).

Pertinent information should be gathered about the terrorist incident, such as:

- When did it occur?
- What type and how much radioactive material may be involved?
- What medical problems may be present besides radionuclide contamination?
- What measurements have been made at the site (eg, air monitors, fixed radiation monitors, nasal smear counts, and skin contamination levels)?
- Are industrial, biological, or chemical materials exposures expected in addition to radionuclides?

Questions about the status of the patient should include:

- What radionuclides now contaminate the patient?
- Where/what are the radiation measurements on the patient's surface?
- Was the patient also exposed to penetrating radiation? What has been learned regarding dosimetry?

- What is known about chemical and physical properties of the compounds containing the radionuclides (eg, particle size, solubility)?
- Has decontamination been attempted and with what success?
- What therapeutic measures have been taken (eg, use of blocking agents or isotopic dilution procedures)?

Patient follow-up questions include:

- Has clothing removed at the site been saved?
- What excreta have been collected and where are the samples?
- What analyses are planned and when?

Good communication between medical personnel and the on-scene response team is critical (NCRP 138, 2001).

## IX. The Externally Exposed Patient

In the absence of contamination, this patient can be admitted to any part of the emergency department without special precautions.

Local external exposures may result in skin manifestations. The doses required are large and usually result from brief radiation exposures.

Initial evidence of radiation damage is erythema which may be transient and then the main phase occurs 14 to 24 days later. Skin effects are often called radiation burns.

In contrast to thermal and chemical burns, pain is not associated with initial erythema of a radiation injury. Skin texture would initially be normal to sight and touch. Always take photographs of suspicious lesions.

Hair distribution is usually normal in the first few days. Epilation does not occur before 10 to 20 days post-exposure. Little ER treatment is required for local exposures.

**Consideration should be given to referring the patient to a radiation medicine specialist (eg, nuclear medicine physician or radiation oncologist as appropriate) for follow-up care.**

In significant total body external exposure, the GI tract and the bone marrow are the organs of concern. Dose-effect relationships for the total body exposure are listed in Table 4.



**Table 4: Total Body External Doses\***

(adapted from Linnemann, 2001)

| Condition                          | mrem    | mSv   | rem | Sv   |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------|-----|------|
| No observable effects              | 5,000   | 50    | 5   | 0.05 |
| Chromosome damage <sup>1</sup>     | 15,000  | 150   | 15  | 0.15 |
| White count depression             | 50,000  | 500   | 50  | 0.50 |
| Symptom threshold <sup>2</sup>     | 100,000 | 1,000 | 100 | 1.00 |
| Nearly 100% lethality <sup>3</sup> | 600,000 | 6,000 | 600 | 6.00 |

\*For brief exposures of penetrating x-ray or gamma rays to the total body

<sup>1</sup>Seen in circulating lymphocytes<sup>2</sup>Individual variations<sup>3</sup>Without treatment

The following discussion of total body external exposure is adapted from Linnemann (2001).

Below a dose of 100,000 mrem (100 rem or 1 Sv), patients are almost always asymptomatic. Above this dose, the time of onset and severity of symptoms are related to the total dose.

Except for overwhelming exposures (exceeding 500-800 rem or 5-8 Sv), the initial symptoms of the *acute radiation syndrome* (headache, malaise, anorexia, nausea, and vomiting) usually don't appear until hours post-exposure.

With doses greater than 200,000 mrem (200 rem or 2 Sv), symptoms of bone marrow depression will appear in about two to three weeks.

**In addition to a general physical, the physician should order white blood cell counts with differential and a platelet count every six hours until a good dose estimate can be obtained.**

If the patient is symptomatic or the initial dose is greater than 100 rem (1 Sv), the patient should be hospitalized and a radiation specialist notified immediately.

Asymptomatic patients with dose estimates less than 100 rem (1 Sv) can be followed on an outpatient basis. The patient and his/her family will be very anxious about the exposure. Therefore, early and continuous counseling regarding radiation effects will be required (Linnemann, 2001).

## X. The Contaminated and Injured Patient

(adapted from Linnemann, 2001)

**Treatment:** The patient who is both contaminated and injured must be treated in the emergency department's Radiation Emergency Treatment Area

(See Appendix C) where the patient can receive adequate medical care while the contamination is controlled. The Radiation Emergency Area is not necessarily a fixed location in the emergency department. It can be set up anywhere in the hospital, eg, in the operating room (OR). It must always have an entrance, a treatment area, a buffer zone, and an exit. The entire complex *must* be controlled. The flow of personnel, equipment, and supplies is in one direction, from the clean part of the hospital into the controlled area. NOTHING and NO ONE leaves this area until properly surveyed for contamination. This includes blood samples, X-rays, etc. **Medical treatment for serious conditions always takes precedence over decontamination.** Contamination that is not visible to the naked eye—dirt, liquid, etc—will not have enough radioactivity to cause early or visible radiation injury to the patient or attendant, and late effects are likely to be negligible. An unhurried approach to decontamination also is influenced by the fact that radiation intensity decreases with the passage of time (Linnemann, 2001).

With a survey meter, levels of contamination are measured in the following units:

|         |        |                                  |
|---------|--------|----------------------------------|
| cpm     | cpm    | counts per minute                |
| mrad/hr | mSv/hr | millirad (millisievert) per hour |
| rad/hr  | Sv/hr  | rad (sievert) per hour           |

The units as listed indicate an increasing amount of radiation exposure. Levels in the cpm range and millirad range are associated with a low-level risk to the medical personnel. Only in the rad/hr (Sv/hr) range would it be necessary to institute more stringent radiation protective procedures in non-life saving situations. These include minimizing time spent near the patient, immediate gross decontamination of the patient by removing all clothing, and wash down of the patient with copious amounts of water or saline in case of wounds.

**Decontamination:** One way to mentally prepare for the task of decontaminating a radioactively contaminated individual is to imagine that you are dealing with someone who has been contaminated with a large amount of bacteria which has a low pathogenic potential such as that contained in raw sewage. The sequence of steps you would follow to perform a safe and effective clean-up is similar in both cases.

Following any “quick decontamination” for the unusual high level of contamination, a more orderly management of the patient should begin. After stabilization, a careful survey of the naked body should begin. The amount of activity and its location are carefully recorded on anatomical burn type charts. Then, and only then, should an orderly decontamination begin.

Decontamination should be performed with the following priorities:

- Wounds
- Orifices
- High-level skin areas
- Low-level skin areas

**How to Decontaminate:** Ordinary soaps and copious amounts of water and/or saline are used to scrub the contaminated area. *The first attempt will usually remove 90% of the contamination.* All contaminated liquids are carefully collected in containers and saved for later disposal.

Continue a **survey-scrub-rinse** sequence until levels of contamination are less than 100 cpm over an area of 10 cm<sup>2</sup> or unless they fail to decline further.

Difficult areas of fixed contamination should be sealed off with gloves, plastic dressings, etc, and professional assistance sought.

Following decontamination, the patient should be evaluated for total body and skin exposure. **Depending on the clinical setting, a radiation specialist may need to be notified.**

## **XI. Treatment of Internal Contamination**

**Definition:** An individual is considered to have internal contamination when radioactive material has gained access into the body through inhalation, ingestion, or absorption.

Internal contamination can occur from the dispersal of powdered, liquid, or gaseous radioactive material, which may enter the body by inhalation or ingestion, through intact skin, or through wounds or burns. Effective treatment requires knowledge of both the radionuclide and the chemical form. Treatment must be instituted quickly or its effectiveness will be limited. The general approaches to the treatment of internal contamination include reduction of absorption, dilution, blockage, displacement by nonradioactive materials, mobilization as a means of elimination from tissue, and chelation (Mettler and Voelz, 2002).

(The following is adapted from the REAC/TS Web site at <http://www.ornl.gov/reacts/internal.htm>.)

Once radioactive materials cross cell membranes, they are said to be incorporated. Incorporation is a time-dependent, physiological phenomenon related to both the physical and chemical natures of the contaminant. Incorporation can be quite rapid, occurring in minutes, or it can take days to

months. Thus, time can be critical and prevention of uptake is urgent. Several methods of preventing uptake (eg, catharsis, gastric lavage) might be applicable and can be prescribed by a physician. Some of the medications or preparations used in decorporation might not be available locally and should be stocked when a decontamination station is being planned and equipped. Examples of specific agents used for selected radionuclides can be seen in Table 5. Expert guidance is available from NCRP 65, poison control centers, or by calling REAC/TS at (865) 576-3131 or its 24-hour emergency number (865) 576-1005.

**Table 5. Treatment for Selected Internal Contaminants**

(Reprinted from the REAC/TS Web site <http://www.ora.gov/reacts/internal.htm>)

| Radionuclide   | Medication                        | For Ingestion/<br>Inhalation   | Principle<br>of Action   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| Iodine         | KI (potassium iodide)             | 130 mg (tabl) stat,<br>followed by<br>130 mg q.d. x 7<br>if indicated  | Blocks thyroid<br>deposition   |
| Rare earths    | <i>Zn-DTPA</i>                    | 1 gm Ca-DTPA<br>(Zn-DTPA) in<br>150-250 ml<br>5 percent D/W IV<br>over 60 minutes  | Chelation  |
| Plutonium      | <i>Ca-DTPA</i>                    |  |  |
| Transplutonics | (investigational agents)          |  |  |
| Yttrium        |                                   |  |  |
| Uranium        | Bicarbonate                       | 2 ampules sodium<br>bicarbonate<br>(44.3 mEq each;<br>7.5%) in 1000 cc<br>normal saline<br>@ 125 cc/hr;<br>alternately, oral<br>administration of<br>two bicarbonate<br>tablets every<br>4 hours until the<br>urine reaches a<br>pH of 8-9 | Alkalinization<br>of urine;<br>reduces<br>chance of<br>acute tubular<br>necrosis |
| Cesium         | <i>Prussian Blue</i>              | 1 gm with  | Blocks   |
| Rubidium       | [Ferrihexacyano-<br>Ferrate (II)] | 100-200 ml water<br>p.o. t.i.d.<br>for several days  | absorption<br>from<br>GI tract and<br>prevents recycling                         |
| Thallium       |                                   |  |  |
| Tritium        | Water                             | Force fluids   | Isotopic<br>dilution   |

If internal contamination is suspected or has occurred, the physician or radiation safety officer should request samples of urine, feces, vomitus, wound secretion, etc. Whole-body counting and radioassay can help evaluate the magnitude of the problem and the effect of any treatment. The contaminated patient admitted with an airway or endotracheal tube must be considered to be internally contaminated.

## **XII. Summary of Evaluation and Treatment Procedures for Internal Contamination**

The following section is adapted from US Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, *Initial Management of Irradiated or Radioactively Contaminated Personnel*, Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy; 1998. Publication BUMED Instruction 6470.10A (Chapter 4, Internal Contamination), available at: <http://www.vnh.org/BUMEDINST6470.10A/TOC.html>.

**Dose Evaluation:** The seriousness of the radiation exposure may be judged by estimating the whole-body dose and using the table for external irradiation to penetrating radiation. If only small volumes, eg, wounds, are contaminated, the seriousness may be judged by estimating the small volume dose and using the table for external exposure to nonpenetrating radiation. Depending on the isotope, the expected dose may be estimated by partial or whole-body counting, counting of excreta, counting of a blood sample, direct frisk, or by calculation using the derived air concentration (DAC) limits and the exposure time and concentration levels.

**Procedures:** Treatment procedures for persons with internally deposited radionuclides are intended to reduce the absorbed radiation dose and hence the risk of possible future biological effects. Two general approaches can accomplish these goals: (1) reduction of absorption and internal deposition, and (2) enhanced elimination or excretion of absorbed radionuclides. Both are most effective when begun as soon as possible after exposure (NCRP 65, 1980).

Depending on the exposed individual's physical condition and the circumstances and extent of the exposure, the following actions should be taken.

- A. Attend to acute medical problems first.
- B. Establish control of external contamination, ie, take action to prevent additional internal contamination through inhalation or ingestion. Depending on the circumstances this may mean removing the external contamination or simply covering the external contamination.
- C. Document a history of the exposure. Pay special attention to identify the time and duration of exposure, isotope involved, chemical form, and any indication of particle size.

- D. Determine or estimate the amount of contamination and expected dose, ie, evaluate the seriousness of the contamination. A number of different approaches may be used to evaluate the extent and magnitude of contamination. Among these are:
1. If the suspected contaminant was an alpha emitter of particulate nature, eg, dust, mist, smoke, etc, obtain nasal and oral swab samples with moistened nasal swabs for counting before showering or washing the face. For these to be useful they need to be collected in the first few (10 to 15) minutes after the potential exposure to particles via inhalation. Allow the swabs to dry before monitoring. Positive swabs are indicative of, but not conclusive for, internal contamination. If swabs are not taken, then the presence of internal contamination can be determined from fecal samples.
  2. If pulmonary or gastrointestinal tract contamination is suspected, perform partial or whole-body counting, if appropriate, for the isotope involved, ie, if the partial or whole-body counting equipment can detect the isotope. The counting system must be calibrated for the isotope and geometry involved. You must remove external contamination before partial or whole-body counting to prevent a false-positive indication. Counts to estimate the presence of contamination, or to verify there is no contamination, may be performed a short time after the exposure. However, counts used to quantify the amount of internal contamination in the lungs should be performed 24 hours or more after the exposure to minimize interference from very low levels (less than amounts detectable by frisking) of external contamination remaining on the skin. For individuals who have internal contamination, an appropriate program of follow-up counts should be established to monitor deposition and to determine the resultant dose assignment.
  3. If partial or whole-body counting equipment is not available, estimates of internal contamination may be made using field monitoring equipment and the guidelines in BUMED Instruction 6470.10A, chapters 6-12, <http://www.vnh.org/BUMEDINST6470.10/TOC.html>.
  4. Depending on the isotope and chemical form, estimates of internal contamination may be made by collecting a 24-hour stool sample if GI contamination is suspected and a 24-hour urine sample if other internal contamination is suspected.
  5. Estimates of potential contamination intake may be made by comparing the known airborne levels and duration of exposure with the DAC limits in the Title 10, *Code of Federal Regulations*. (A listing of the DACs can be found in 10 CFR Part 20, Appendix B.)

6. Minimize absorption by administering antacids, eg, aluminum hydroxide or similar material.
7. Hasten elimination of waste by administering a cathartic, eg, magnesium sulphate or castor oil. Collect appropriate urine and fecal samples for radioanalysis.
8. If radioiodine (reactor accident) is present, consider giving prophylactic potassium iodide (Lugol's Solution) within the first 24 hours. It is ineffective if given late.
9. If pulmonary contamination from a "bone seeker" (radium, strontium, actinium, thorium, plutonium, etc) is detected or suspected based upon intake data at the scene and the internal contamination appears to exceed 10 percent of the limits specified in the *USN Radiation Health Protection Manual*, or if there is evidence of a very high specific activity particle (R/hr) lodged in the sinuses, the following actions in addition to the above should be performed to enhance removal of the contamination. (These actions are usually not necessary for reactor corrosion products, due to their insolubility and low specific activity. These procedures cause irritation to the sinuses, which generally outweighs the benefits of reducing the exposure.)
  - a. Irrigate nasal passages gently with saline solution or water through a catheter or syringe. Keep patient's head bent over a basin with mouth open.
  - b. If contamination persists, repeat the irrigation procedure. If the contamination levels cannot be reduced to less than 10 percent of the limits specified in the *USN Radiation Health Protection Manual* after three irrigation attempts, contact REAC/TS at (865) 576-3131 or its 24-hour emergency number (865) 576-1005 for further guidance.
  - c. Monitor any coughed up mucus for contamination.

### **XIII. Radiation Counseling**

(adapted from Linnemann, 2001)

Patients and medical personnel who have been exposed to ionizing radiation regardless of the reason or exposure level will be understandably concerned about the effects of this dose. These concerns will fall into four major categories:

- Acute effects
- Cancer risks

- Genetic risks
- Teratogenic risks

In order to produce acute effects (Table 6), large doses over a brief period of time are required. Contamination of the magnitude necessary to produce such large doses over a brief period of time is not likely to be seen on a live patient (National Academy of Sciences, 1990). Long-term effects of radiation are shown in Table 7.

**Table 6: Acute Effects of Radiation\***

(Linnemann, 2001)

| Condition              | mrem    | mSv   | rem | Sv   |
|------------------------|---------|-------|-----|------|
| No observable effects  | 5,000   | 50    | 5   | 0.05 |
| Blood Abnormalities    | 15,000  | 150   | 15  | 0.15 |
| Sperm Abnormalities    | 15,000  | 150   | 15  | 0.15 |
| Nausea/Anorexia        | 100,000 | 1,000 | 100 | 1.00 |
| Bone Marrow Depression | 200,000 | 2,000 | 200 | 2.00 |
| Epilation              | 300,000 | 3,000 | 300 | 3.00 |
| Erythema               | 600,000 | 6,000 | 600 | 6.00 |

\*Brief exposure (minutes to a few hours)

**Table 7: Long Term Effects of Radiation<sup>1</sup>**

(UNSCEAR, 2000)

| Effect               | mrem    | mSv   | rem | Sv   |
|----------------------|---------|-------|-----|------|
| Fetal Abnormalities* | 10,000  | 100   | 10  | 0.10 |
| Cancer*              | 10,000  | 100   | 10  | 0.10 |
| Genetic              | 25,000  | 250   | 25  | 0.25 |
| Cancer Death Risk 5% | 100,000 | 1,000 | 100 | 1.00 |
| Genetic Risk .5%     | 100,000 | 1,000 | 100 | 1.00 |
| Cataracts 10%**      | 250,000 | 2,500 | 250 | 2.50 |

<sup>1</sup>Brief exposure (minutes to hours)

\*Levels below which it becomes exceedingly difficult to consistently demonstrate effects

\*\*10% develop cataracts at this dose (gamma, x-ray)

For comparison, other common exposures are presented in Table 8 and Table 9.



**Table 8: Typical Medical Doses\***

(UNSCEAR, 2000)

| Medical X-ray  | mrem | mSv  |
|----------------|------|------|
| Chest Study    | 14   | .14  |
| Cervical Spine | 27   | .27  |
| Pelvis         | 83   | .8   |
| Skull          | 7    | .07  |
| Upper GI       | 360  | 3.6  |
| Barium Enema   | 640  | 6.40 |
| CAT Scan       | 880  | 8.8  |

\*Effective doses. Doses vary depending on equipment, operator, etc.

**Table 9: Environmental Doses\***

(adapted from Linnemann, 2001)

|   | Dose  |        |
|---|-------|--------|
|   | mrem  | mSv    |
| Natural background <sup>1</sup> (excluding radon) | 100   | 1.00 * |
| Radon inhalation <sup>1</sup>                     | 200   | 2.00 * |
| Television viewing                                | 1     | 0.01   |
| Air flight: New York-Los Angeles**                | 4     | 0.04   |
| Living within 50 mi. of nuclear plant             | <1    | <0.01  |
| Chernobyl (avg. public exposure) <sup>2</sup>     | 1,500 | 15.00  |
| Annual limit for radiation workers                | 5,000 | 50.00  |
| Annual limit for public exposure                  | 100   | 1.00   |
| Average public exposure at TMI <sup>3</sup>       | 2     | 0.02   |

<sup>1</sup>Average annual dose in U.S.<sup>2</sup>Average calculated dose to 135,000 people living within 18 miles of the site<sup>3</sup>Average calculated dose to people living within 50 miles of Three Mile Island accident site

\*Effective dose

\*\*Per flight

**The risks of radiation effects to treating personnel associated with a contaminated patient, if any, are commensurate with or below other risks commonly faced during the course of medical practice in most emergency departments (Linnemann, 2001).**

Facilities treating contaminated patients should establish guidelines regarding exposure for medical personnel.

*Teratogenic effects* are particularly noteworthy because there *appears to be a threshold dose below which damage does not occur* (ICRP, 2000). This dose is about 10,000 mrem (10 rem or 0.1 Sv), a level seldom achieved in diagnostic X-ray or nuclear medicine procedures. As an additional

precaution, the suggested limit during pregnancy is 500 mrem (5 mSv). When confronted with concerns about low levels of exposure, it may be helpful to compare the dose in question with the more familiar medical exposures (Linnemann, 2001).

### **Exposure Guidance for Emergency Responders in Terrorist Events**

Special individual exposure guidance, often in excess of exposure limits (ie, 50 mSv [5,000 mrem] per year for workers and 1 mSv [100 mrem] per year for members of the public), is required for emergency response operations because the benefits of establishing control at the scene are so great (NCRP 138, 2001).

The following is adapted from NCRP Report No. 116 (NCRP 116, 1993), *Limitation of Exposure to Ionizing Radiation*.

Normally, only actions involving life saving justify acute exposures that are significantly in excess of the annual effective dose limit. The use of volunteers for exposures during emergency actions is desirable. Older workers with low lifetime accumulated effective doses should be chosen from among the volunteers whenever possible. Exposures during emergency operations that do not involve life saving should, to the extent possible, be controlled to the occupational dose limits. Where this cannot be accomplished, it is recommended that a limit of 0.5 Sv (50 rem) effective dose and an equivalent dose of 5 Sv (500 rem) to the skin be applied, which is consistent with ICRP recommendations (ICRP, 1991).

When, for life saving or equivalent purposes, the equivalent dose may approach or exceed 0.5 Sv (50 rem) to a large portion of the body in a short time, the workers need to understand not only the potential for acute effects but they should also have an appreciation of the substantial increase in their lifetime risk of cancer. If internally deposited radionuclide exposures are also possible, these should be taken into account (NCRP 116, 1993).

*See NCRP Report No. 138 (NCRP 138, 2001), chapter 8, for a detailed discussion of dose limitation and exposure guidance for terrorist events.*

## **XIV. Basic Rules for Handling Contaminated Patients**

To summarize, the basic rules for handling ill or injured patients contaminated with radioactive material are:

- 1. Treat life-threatening conditions first without regard to radiation or contamination.**
- 2. Isolate patient and restrict access to the treatment/evaluation area.**
- 3. Maintain contamination control. Facilities should plan in advance and include the procedure in their Disaster Plan.**
- 4. Obtain professional assistance from your facility's Radiology/Nuclear Medicine/Radiation Oncology/Medical Physics/Radiation Safety specialist.**

## **Biological and Chemical Terrorist Agents: Radiological Findings**

Table 10, Radiological Findings Associated with Biological and Chemical Threats to Public Health, focuses on the radiological findings associated with disease or injury due to the most common agents of biological and chemical terrorism. For some syndromes, as indicated, there are no specifically related image findings associated with the effects of an agent.

If any of the infections or chemical injuries listed in the table is suspected, call the local health department immediately and institute appropriate precautions.

The reader who seeks additional information, such as differential diagnosis, laboratory and test results, treatment, or public health actions is referred to the following resources:

American Medical Association (AMA)  
[www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org)

California Department of Health Services  
[www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/bt](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/bt)

Medical Management of Biological Casualties Handbook  
[www.nbc-med.org/SiteContent/HomePage/WhatsNew/MedManual/Sep99/Current/sep99.html](http://www.nbc-med.org/SiteContent/HomePage/WhatsNew/MedManual/Sep99/Current/sep99.html)

Medical Management of Chemical Casualties Handbook  
[www.vnh.org/CHEMCASU/titlepg.html](http://www.vnh.org/CHEMCASU/titlepg.html)

**Table 10: Radiological Findings Associated with Biological and Chemical Threats to Public Health**

Adapted from Can you recognize these public health threats in your facility? San Francisco Department of Public Health, 2001. <http://www.medept.org/sfdph/bt/syndromes/index.html> and Ketait, et al, in press.

| Syndrome   | Bioterrorism Threat<br>Disease Description   | Initial Laboratory<br>and Other<br>Diagnostic Test Results  |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Acute<br/>Respiratory<br/>with Fever<br/>Distress</b> | <b>Inhalation anthrax:</b><br>Abrupt onset of fever;<br>chest pain; respiratory<br>distress without<br>radiographic findings of<br>pneumonia; no history<br>of trauma or chronic<br>disease; progression to<br>shock and death within<br>24-36 hours | Chest X-ray with widened<br>mediastinum<br><br>CT with enlarged<br>hemorrhagic central nodes<br><br>Images and additional<br>information available<br>from AFIP/INOVA Fairfax Hospital<br>at: <a href="http://anthrax.radpath.org">http://anthrax.radpath.org</a> |
|  | <b>Pneumonic plague:</b><br>Apparent severe<br>community-acquired<br>pneumonia but with<br>hemoptysis, cyanosis,<br>gastrointestinal<br>symptoms, shock  | Variable CXR findings,<br>most commonly include<br>bilateral parenchymal<br>infiltrates. Mediastinal,<br>cervical, and hilar<br>adenopathy may be<br>present in both bubonic<br>and pneumonic plague.   |
|  | <b>Ricin (aerosolized):</b><br>Acute onset of fever,<br>chest pain and cough,<br>progressing to<br>respiratory distress and<br>hypoxemia; not improved<br>with antibiotics; death in<br>36-72 hours  | Chest X-ray with<br>pulmonary edema that<br>presents in about<br>18 hours and progresses<br>to findings of severe<br>respiratory distress with<br>death from hypoxemia  |
|  | <b>Staphylococcal<br/>enterotoxin B:</b><br>Acute onset of fever, chills,<br>headache, nonproductive cough<br>and myalgia (influenza-like illness)   | Normal chest X-ray  |

**Table 10** continued

| Syndrome                          | Bioterrorism Threat<br>Disease Description   | Initial Laboratory<br>and Other<br>Diagnostic Test Results  |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Acute Rash<br/>with Fever</b>  | <p><b>Smallpox:</b><br/>Papular rash with fever that begins on the face and extremities and uniformly progresses to vesicles and pustules; headache, vomiting, back pain, and delirium common</p>      | <p>Pulmonary edema may occur with the flat and hemorrhagic form, possibly representing diffuse alveolar damage. In smallpox handler's lung, a mild form in previously vaccinated persons, CXR may show ill-defined nodular opacities in upper lung field.</p> |
|                                   | <p><b>Viral Hemorrhagic Fever (eg, Ebola):</b><br/>Fever with mucous membrane bleeding, petechiae, thrombocytopenia, and hypotension in a patient without underlying malignancy</p>                    | <p>American Hantaviruses in early stage show interstitial edema on CXR. Severe cases show bilateral alveolar filling within 48 hours. CXR abnormalities are not common in illness caused by other VHF.</p>  |
| <b>Neurologic<br/>Syndromes</b>   | <p><b>Botulism:</b><br/>Acute bilateral descending flaccid paralysis beginning with cranial nerve palsies</p>  | <p>No specifically related image findings</p>   |
|                                   | <p><b>Encephalitis (Venezuelan, Eastern, Western):</b><br/>Encephalopathy with fever and seizures or focal neurologic deficits</p>   | <p>MRI is more sensitive than CT, but both show abnormalities in area of basal ganglia and thalamus. MRI with T-2 weighted sequences show foci of increased signal in basal ganglia.</p>  |
| <b>Influenza-like<br/>Illness</b> | <p><b>Brucellosis:</b><br/>Irregular fever, chills, malaise, headache, weight loss, profound weakness and fatigue. Arthralgias, sacroiliitis, paravertebral abscesses. Anorexia, nausea, vomiting,</p> | <p>CXR nonspecific: normal, bronchopneumonia, abscesses, single or miliary nodules, enlarged hilar nodes, effusions</p>   |

**Table 10** continued

| Syndrome                           | Bioterrorism Threat Disease Description   | Initial Laboratory and Other Diagnostic Test Results   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Influenza-like Illness (continued) | <p><b>Brucellosis</b> continued: diarrhea, hepatosplenomegaly. May have cough and pleuritic chest pain.</p> <p><b>Tularemia (Typhoidal, Pneumonic):</b> Fever, chills, rigors, headache, myalgias, coryza, sore throat initially; followed by weakness, anorexia, weight loss. Substernal discomfort, dry cough if pneumonic disease.</p> | <p>Radiologic evidence of bronchopneumonia is usually evident. Lymphadenopathy and pleural effusions occur in one third of patients. Acute radiographic changes may include subsegmental or lobar infiltrates, hilar adenopathy, pleural effusion, and apical or miliary infiltrates. Less common changes include ovoid densities, cavitation, and bronchopleural fistula.</p> |
| Blistering Syndromes               | <p><b>T2 Mycotoxin:</b> Abrupt onset of mucocutaneous and airway irritation including skin (pain and blistering), eye (pain and tearing), GI (bleeding, vomiting, and diarrhea), and airway (dyspnea and cough)</p>   | <p>No specifically related image findings. Patients can develop asthma and hemoptysis from airway irritation and have non-specific related findings.</p>   |
| Chemical Exposure                  | <p><b>Chemical agents:</b> Include mustards, nerve agents, phosgene, and unidentified chemicals</p>   | <p>For guidance on management, visit the Web site of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) at: <a href="http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/mmg.html">http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/mmg.html</a></p>  |

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## Web Resources

American Association of Physicists in Medicine

[www.aapm.org](http://www.aapm.org)

American College of Radiology

[www.acr.org](http://www.acr.org)

American Medical Association (AMA)

[www.ama-assn.org](http://www.ama-assn.org)

American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology

[www.astro.org](http://www.astro.org)

California Department of Health Services

[www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/bt/](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/bt/)

Department of Homeland Security

[www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/)

Medical Management of Biological Casualties Handbook – 4th edition

[www.vnh.org/BIOCASU/toc.html](http://www.vnh.org/BIOCASU/toc.html)

Medical Management of Chemical Casualties Handbook

[www.vnh.org/CHEMCASU/titlepg.html](http://www.vnh.org/CHEMCASU/titlepg.html)

Medical Management of Radiological Casualties Handbook

[www.afri.usuhs.mil/www/outreach/pdf/radiologicalhandbooksp99-2.pdf](http://www.afri.usuhs.mil/www/outreach/pdf/radiologicalhandbooksp99-2.pdf)

REAC/TS Radiation Emergency Assistance Center/Training Site

[www.ornl.gov/reacts](http://www.ornl.gov/reacts)

## Federal and State Emergency Contacts

1. US Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
[www.nrc.gov](http://www.nrc.gov)  
NRC's 24-Hour Incident Response Operations Center  
(301) 816-5100
2. US Food and Drug Administration  
[www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/bioterrorism.html](http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/bioterrorism.html)
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [www.bt.cdc.gov](http://www.bt.cdc.gov) or  
[www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.html)
4. US Health and Human Services [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov) or  
[www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.html](http://www.hhs.gov/disasters/index.html)
5. State Emergency Management Directors  
[www.fema.gov/fema/statedr.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/fema/statedr.shtm)
6. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry  
[www.atsdr.cdc.gov/2p-emergency-response.html](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/2p-emergency-response.html)
7. National Center for Environmental Health  
[www.cdc.gov/nceh/eehs](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/eehs)
8. Federal Emergency Management Agency  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)
9. Conference of Radiation Control Programs Directors  
[www.crcpd.org](http://www.crcpd.org)
10. Department of Homeland Security  
[www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov)
11. US Department of Energy  
[www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov)
12. White House  
[www.whitehouse.gov/homeland](http://www.whitehouse.gov/homeland)
13. Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute  
[www.afri.usuhs.mil](http://www.afri.usuhs.mil)
14. US Department of State  
[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

## Appendix A: Treatment of Radiation Exposed Patients at General Hospitals

| Type of Exposure   | Possible Consequences   | Initial Laboratory Treatment at a General Hospital   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>External Exposure</b>   |   |  |
| Localized exposure, most often to hands  | Localized erythema with possible development of blisters, ulceration, and necrosis  | Clinical observation and treatment<br><br>Securing of medical advice if necessary  |
| Total or partial body exposure, with minimal delayed clinical signs                    | No clinical manifestation for 3 hours or more following exposure<br><br>Not life-threatening<br><br>Minimal hematological changes | Clinical observation and symptomatic treatment<br><br>Sequential hematological investigations  |
| Total or partial body exposure, with early prodromal signs                             | Acute radiation syndrome of mild or severe degree depending on dose   | Treatment as above plus securing of specialized treatment<br><br>Full blood count and HLA typing before transfer to a specialized center |
| Total or partial body exposure, with thermal, chemical irradiation burns and/or trauma | Severe combined injuries, life-threatening  | Treatment of life-threatening conditions<br><br>Treatment as above and early transfer to a specialized center                            |
| <b>External Contamination</b>  |   |  |
| Low-level contamination, intact skin that can be cleaned promptly                      | Unlikely, mild radiation burns  | Decontamination of skin and monitoring   |
| Low-level contamination, intact skin where cleaning is delayed                         | Radiation burns<br><br>Percutaneous intake of radionuclides   | Securing of specialist advice  |
| Low-level contamination, with thermal, chemical, or radiation burns and/or trauma      | Internal contamination  | Securing of specialist advice  |

## Appendix A continued

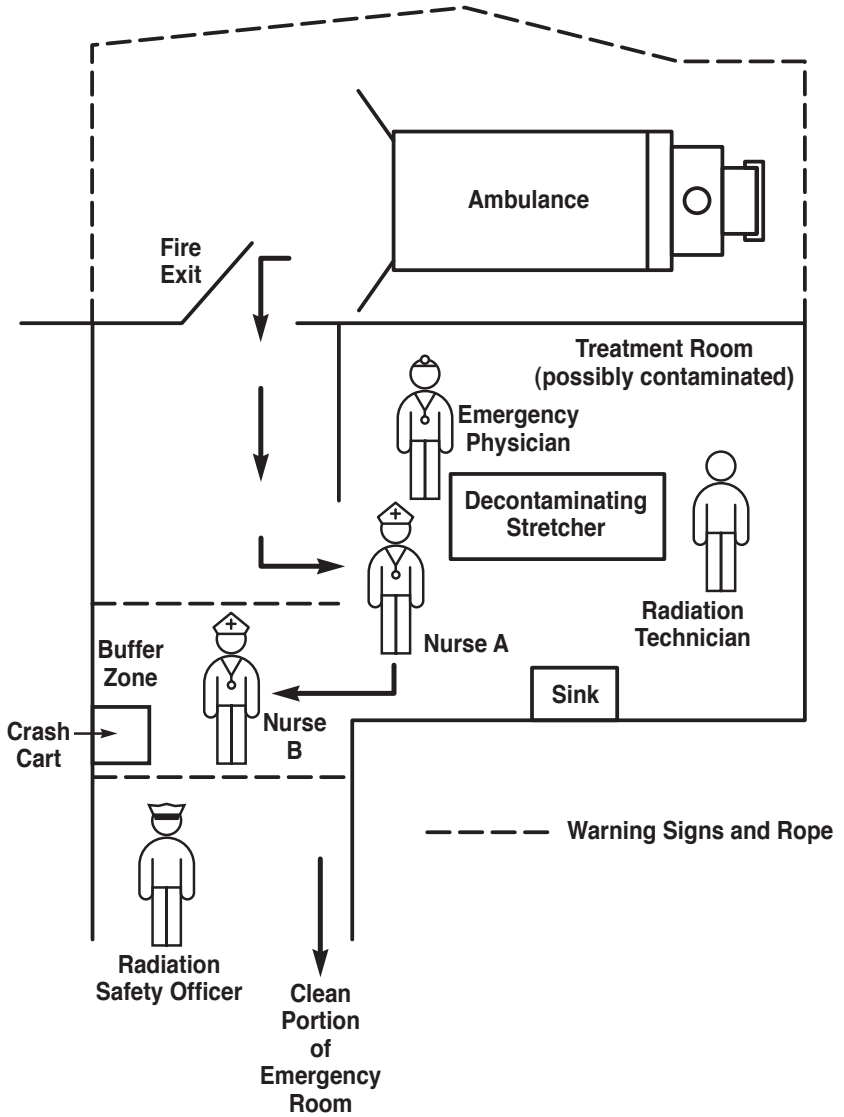
| Type of Exposure   | Possible Consequences                               | Initial Laboratory Treatment at a General Hospital   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>External Contamination (continued)</b>  |   |  |
| Extensive contamination, with associated wounds  | Likely internal contamination                       | Securing of specialist advice  |
| Extensive contamination, with thermal, chemical, or radiation burns and/or trauma  | Severe combined injuries and internal contamination | First aid, plus treatment of life-threatening injuries; early transfer to a specialized center |
| <b>Internal Contamination</b>  |   |  |
| Inhalation and ingestion of radionuclides—insignificant quantity (activity)  | No immediate consequences                           | Securing of specialist advice  |
| Inhalation and ingestion of radionuclides—significant quantity(activity) of radionuclide   | No immediate consequences                           | Nasopharyngeal lavage<br><br>Early transfer to a specialized center to enhance excretion       |
| Absorption through damaged skin (see under external contamination)   | No immediate consequences                           | Securing of specialist advice  |
| Major incorporation, with or without external total, or partial body, or localized irradiation, serious wounds and/or burns                                    | Severe combined radiation injury                    | Treatment of life-threatening conditions and transfer to a specialized center                  |
| <i>Source:</i> Planning the Medical Response to Radiological Accidents, International Atomic Energy Agency, Safety Series Report No. 4, Vienna, Austria, 1998. |   |  |

## Appendix B: Radiation Accident Hospital Response

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. NOTIFICATION</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of patients</li><li>• Type of injury/illness</li><li>• Is the patient contaminated?</li><li>• Staff/REA* preparation</li></ul>   |
| <b>2. PATIENT ARRIVAL</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical report</li><li>• Radiological report</li><li>• Clean team transfer</li></ul>  |
| <b>3. TRIAGE / EVALUATION / TREATMENT</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cut away clothing</li><li>• Isolate contaminated area</li></ul>   |
| <b>4. DRY DECONTAMINATION</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove contaminated articles from patient/staff</li></ul>   |
| <b>5. RADIOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Survey/document</li><li>• Sample orifices and contaminated areas/label</li></ul>  |
| <b>6. WET DECONTAMINATION</b>             | <p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wound/orifices</li><li>• Intact skin</li></ul> <p><b>Methods</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drape</li><li>• Wash</li><li>• Rinse</li><li>• Dry</li><li>• Survey</li></ul> |
| <b>7. PATIENT EXIT</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clean pathway</li><li>• Clean team transfer</li><li>• Final survey at control line</li></ul>  |
| <b>8. STAFF EXIT</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove anticontamination clothing</li><li>• Survey at control line</li></ul>  |
| <b>9. REA CLEAN UP</b>                    |   |

\*Radiation Emergency Area

# Appendix C: Stylized Map of Radiation Emergency Room



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