

RulemakingForm3CEm Resource

From: ERNEST FULLER [fullercogm@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, August 19, 2015 5:53 PM
To: RulemakingComments Resource
Subject: [External_Sender] Docket Nos. PRM-20-28, PRM-20-29, and PRM-20-30, NRC-2015-0057

Dear Secretary,

The NRC should reject the three petitions for rulemaking cited in the subject line since they are based on unsound science.

The 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 supported by a few pro-nuclear power proponents. The hormesis model, rather than recognizing that any dose of radiation exposure may be harmful and should be avoided if possible infers that low doses of radiation exposure may actually be beneficial. There is no solid evidence of any kind that that is the case.

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 consider 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, 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 causes other kinds of health damage in addition to cancer, but the regulations and risk studies continue to ignore these studies, and thus are inadequate in that sense.

The real need is to strengthen radiation standards, in particular to account for the reality that radiation is more harmful to children, especially girls, and to women than it is to men, and that the "standard man" approach used by the NRC allows for greater risks to those who are more vulnerable.

Any changes to radiation regulations contemplated by the NRC should be to strengthen them, not weaken them.

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