



HEALTH PHYSICS SOCIETY

Specialists in Radiation Safety

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Editor, USA Today
Via e-mail
EDITOR@USATODAY.com

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Dear Editor:

The Health Physics Society, of which I serve as President, is comprised of over 5,600 radiation safety professionals who are dedicated to radiation safety.

In the Thursday February 28, 2002 issue of USA Today, there are two articles by Peter Eisler regarding the purported health effects of fallout from nuclear weapons' detonations. The report, cited by Mr. Eisler, contains an important fact that was overlooked.

The Report, on page 4, states:

"The usefulness of the doses estimated in this project is limited to rudimentary evaluations of the average impact on limited health outcomes for the population of the United States. Because of the low precision of the estimates, these doses should not be used to estimate health effects for specific individuals or for subpopulations. The goal of these calculations was to determine feasibility only, and, therefore, the magnitude of the uncertainty of these doses has not always been evaluated. Although the computed county-specific deposition densities and doses (presented in a series of maps in the Technical Report) are uncertain, dose maps, such as shown in the Figure, are useful to illustrate general spatial patterns of fallout exposure for average individuals across the United States..."

The average radiation doses from fallout were of the order of one-fiftieth of the normal background exposure that we all receive. The practice of multiplying a small average dose times the population of the U.S. times some linear risk factor is inherently faulty and yields meaningless results. There is no known or expected risk associated with such small extra exposures.

If there *were* such risks, we would have to evacuate many public buildings as well as large portions of Colorado and New Mexico (because of the elevated natural radiation background doses).

Thank you for the opportunity to present my views.

Sincerely,

George Anastas /ss/

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