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2011 AAHP Special Session

Radiation Protection—How Did We Get Here? Where Should We Have Gone?

Paul Stansbury, CHP, AAHP Past President

Ever wonder why there are so many organizations—U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), Department of Energy, U.S. Army, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), to name a few—affecting or doing radiation protection in so many different ways? Some organizations regulate on dose; others on risk. Some organizations provide guidance. Others’ actions are more like the guidance one gets from a traffic cop. How may the fundamental nature of radiation protection of individuals in the United States be changing over time? The Academy’s Special Session at the Health Physics Society (HPS) meeting in West Palm Beach, as titled above, spoke to these topics and was well attended.

Each year, the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) sponsors a special session at the annual HPS meeting. This year’s session was the result of immediate Past President Paul Stansbury and Dan Strom “resonating” on the subject, and then the past president recruiting speakers, encouraging them to “take no prisoners” among the “sacred cows” of our profession. (And if this bad mix of metaphors doesn’t stir your curiosity as well as a blender can be used to clean and scale fish, please consult the Academy’s webpage for the session’s abstracts and most of the speakers’ sets of slides.)

I would like to thank Rich Vetter and Dan Strom for cochairing the session. I would also like to thank Robin Hill of the HPS Program Committee for the flexibility in accommodating last-minute submissions and changes. Technically, the session came off without a hitch, and the audience attendance indicated that the session was interesting and informative. The papers presented are as follows:

- *How We Formed Our Profession—The Psychology of Radiation Safety*, Ray Johnson, Dade Moeller Radiation Safety Academy

- *The Role of IRPA in Improving Radiation Protection*, Dick Toohey, Oak Ridge Associated Universities
- *Evolution of HPS Influence in Public Policy*, Rich Vetter, HPS
- *U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s Approach to Radiation Protection*, Rick Whitman, Indiana University and Purdue University
- *A Short History of Radiation Protection at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*, Mike Boyd, U.S. EPA
- *Developments in Radiation Dose Limits for Astronauts*, Dan Strom, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) (**NOTE:** This paper was of importance to the special session, because only NASA sets radiation dose limits based on age and sex: a practice that would be an anathema at many other agencies.)
- *Radiation Protection at the Department of Energy: Politics and Science—A Historical Perspective*, Rick Jones, Executive Consultant
- *Hijacked by Politics? Science, Policy, and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission*, Thomas Wellock and Cynthia Jones, U.S. NRC
- *The Evolution of Military Health Physics: Lessons Learned and Future Directions*, Michael Melanson, U.S. Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute
- *The Rise and Fall of Paternalism in Radiation Protection*, Dan Strom, PNNL

The session revealed all sorts of interesting quirks and historical wrinkles in our fascinating profession, and each speaker took his charge (to be critical and questioning) to heart! I’m also pleased to note that, although my six years on the Academy’s Executive Committee have been interesting, challenging, and productive, writing this summary of the Academy’s special session is my last official task. (Hooray!)

The State of AAHP Finances

Andrew H. Thatcher, CHP, Treasurer

The American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP) investments have experienced a robust increase in the portfolio value over the past two years. Using the end of May 2011 as compared to the same period in 2010, the total value of long-, intermediate-, and short-term securities is \$772,564 and represents a \$91,000 increase from the prior year and is the highest valuation ever for the funds. We have our investment manager, Neal S. Abravanel, to thank for much of this success.

The combined funds performance over the past several years reflects the AAHP investment philosophy to minimize losses during downturns at the expense of lagging the market during upturns. Such a philosophy serves us well when one considers the relative uncertainty in the market due to national debt-related concerns and the struggling economy.

At the annual meeting in West Palm Beach, the

Executive Committee adopted the FY2011/2012 operating budget as proposed by the Finance Committee. This budget estimates \$220,023 for expenses of the Academy and the American Board of Health Physics (ABHP) and \$169,000 for income. While such a budget is obviously lopsided on the expense side, we have two things working in our favor. First, the expenditures of the officers and committees of the AAHP and ABHP have historically been significantly less than projected. Secondly, we have the enviable position of being able to utilize the AAHP investments to cover any differences. The use of the investments for operational costs has allowed us to maintain our current budget without the need to raise our annual dues. The AAHP will formalize the use of the investments in this capacity over the next year. If you have a question related to the investments or the budget, please email me at thatcher.drew@comcast.net.

Continuing Education Committee

Jim Willison, CHP, Chair

The Continuing Education Committee organized three eight-hour courses at the 2011 Health Physics Society (HPS) Annual Meeting in West Palm Beach in June. Course 1, "Simple Tools for Counseling Radiation Workers and the Public," was taught by Ray Johnson. Course 2, "Statistical Issues in Health Physics," was taught by Dan Strom and Tom Johnson. Course 3, "Introduction to MARSAME," was taught by Richard Toohey and Alex Boerner. The 109 attendees for the American Academy of Health

Physics courses is the highest number we have had in several years!

Two courses for the HPS midyear meeting in Dallas in February are being finalized. However, it's not too early to start thinking about courses for the annual meeting in Sacramento in July. If you have an idea for an eight-hour course that you would like to put together, please contact me. Instructors of these courses are granted a \$1,000 honorarium per course and also receive 20 CECs for their efforts.

A Prelude to the CHP Salary Survey

Andrew H. Thatcher, CHP

This is the sales/participation pitch in advance of the annual certified health physicist (CHP) salary survey. Over the years, Gary Lauten has done an amazing job of pulling together the CHP salary data and segregating this into every imaginable way possible. He even provides data as to how this information is valuable to new and current CHPs.

Yet, in spite of all of the great information the survey provides to health physicists and to human-resource folks, the participation rate remains below

the pass rate for a typical Part II exam—and we all know that is not very high, even on a good year!

So, we're asking all of you hardworking CHPs, from all walks of life, to take five to 10 minutes out of your lives and participate in this year's survey. If nothing else, it should reduce the standard deviation on the results and it will be useful to know whether a higher participation rate will skew the data in any way.

Thanks in advance for your willingness to contribute to this effort.

