

With the increased size and frequency of nuclear weapons testing in 1954, it became apparent that radioactive fallout would constitute a new source of radiation exposure, and one, moreover, that would affect the whole population rather than only a part, as in the case of radioisotopes. This realization led to a study not only of fallout but also of other sources of radiation exposure affecting the whole population such as the medical use of X-rays and radiation from natural sources. More recently, our activities have been extended to meet problems associated with the building of nuclear reactors for power production.

Underlying these various developments, of course, has been our concern for the possible effects of radiation exposure on both exposed individuals and on future generations. Study programmes in these areas are under way or planned.

So much for the historical background. Let me turn now to a closer examination of the programme itself.

Administrative Activities

On the administration side, we have the task of acting as health advisers to the Atomic Energy Control Board. This includes providing advice not only on the use of radioisotopes but also with respect to nuclear reactors. A representative of the Department serves on the Board's Reactor Safety Advisory Committee which studies proposals for the construction and operation of these facilities.

In addition, we work in a more familiar area. Over the years, radiologists and other X-ray workers across the country have consulted with us in the matter of protective measures. This has been purely voluntary on their part and has led us to develop quite an extensive programme concerned with X-rays.

In carrying out these administrative activities, we have established close working relationships with many outside groups. These include other federal agencies, various professional associations, universities, and provincial as well as local Departments of Health. On the world scene, our officials serve on such bodies as the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

The latter, I might add, is an independent professional organization set up in 1928 to deal with the health hazards of X-rays. It later enlarged its scope to include radioisotopes. It consists of world experts elected on the basis of recognized ability. The recommendations of the Commission are used by the Department in its radiation protection activities.