



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. 00-143

September 22, 2000

NRC HISTORIAN EXAMINES HISTORY OF RADIATION PROTECTION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's historian, J. Samuel Walker, examines the evolution during the twentieth century of radiation protection standards and efforts to ensure radiation safety for nuclear workers and the general public in a recently published book, *Permissible Dose*.

The book covers the political and scientific debate on radiation risks caused by fallout from nuclear bomb testing, exposure from medical or manufacturing procedures, effluents from nuclear power, and radioactivity from man-made and natural sources. It shows how scientific research and political controversy have led to revisions in the "maximum permissible dose" and why exposure standards have been tightened since the 1930s.

The primary focus of the book is on the programs and roles of the federal agencies--the Atomic Energy Commission, the NRC and the Environmental Protection Agency--established to provide protection for those exposed to low-level radiation from activities under their jurisdictions.

The book does not represent an official position of the NRC nor should the conclusions be viewed as policy statements of the agency. It is the third in a series of publications on the history of nuclear regulation sponsored by the NRC. The previous two volumes by the NRC historian are *Controlling the Atom: The Beginnings of Nuclear Regulation, 1946-1962* and *Containing the Atom: Nuclear Regulation in a Changing Environment, 1963-1971*. All three books have been published by the University of California Press.

###