

from an ACME printout

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of letter to
Seaborg
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Recommendations on Radiation Exposure Policy

"The AEC, during the decade of the 1970's, will program nuclear energy activities so as to minimize the dose-commitment of the U.S. population to the lowest practical value. It will in any case plan to limit that commitment to less than 10 mi per capita per year, averaged over the U.S. population. We are advised by geneticists that this exposure, which is only one-tenth the natural radiation background, will not influence the mutation rate by as much as one-percent of its "normal" value, and that this is the most sensitive indicator of any adverse biological effect of radiation. 10 mr/year is, furthermore, a small part of the variation in background radiation found at different altitudes in the U.S. or resulting from different geological formations.

JC's suggested
language

According to our calculations, this policy objective will be met by adherence to the existing standard that limits radiation levels to 500 mr/year at the boundaries of nuclear sites, in view of the rapid falloff of exposure with distance from radiation sources. In fact, most nuclear installations have operated a large part of the time at dose rates far below this rigorously enforced standard.

(... then language on the difference between a population exposure policy of the AEC and the emission standards imposed on a given plant.)

Finally, this policy has been based on a conservative evaluation of the best available data on biological effects of radiation. It is, for example, more restrictive than the standards suggested by the SCRP. The AEC will continue to sustain an active program of research needed to narrow the zone of uncertainty in these calculations. The conservative approach we have adopted suggests that further knowledge will very likely justify an eventual relaxation of this policy which may be a desirable option if the use of nuclear fission for power continues to expand in the next century. We have, nevertheless, deemed it prudent to adopt a relatively pessimistic view in assimilating uncertainties that exist at the present time into our policies for this decade.

With the cooperation of the nuclear industry, physical and biological scientists, and concerned citizens we believe we can move forward in the use of nuclear technology to solve pressing needs for economical power.