News Briefs

Academy Issues Report Assessing Reactor Safety

The National Research Council, the research arm of the Washington, DC-based National Academy of Sciences, has issued a report for the Department of Energy assessing safety at five Department of Energy (DOE) reactors.

The report, *Safety Issues at the DOE Test and Research Reactors*, is a companion volume to an October 1987 report assessing safety at defense production reactors. Both studies were completed at the request of US Secretary of Energy John S. Herrington, who sought the Academy's involvement following the 1986 accident at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor in the Soviet Union.

The five nuclear reactors studied in this report are used to produce radioisotopes for medical, industrial and military purposes; to provide neutron sources for use in scientific research; and to conduct irradiation and other experiments connected with the government's space, fusion and advanced reactor programs. They include the Advanced Test Reactor and the Experimental Breeder Reactor II at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, the Fast Flux Test Facility on the Hanford Federal Nuclear Reservation in Washington state, the High Flux Beam Reactor at Brookhaven National Laboratory in New York, and the High Flux Isotope Reactor at Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Noting that "the risk profiles of the five test and research reactors do vary significantly," the report assessed each one individually and provided recommendations tailored to each site. Overall, the report said that the current system "tends to disperse responsibility for safety and seems to require decisions with safety consequences by organizations that are divorced from day-to-day responsibility." The study recommended that DOE strengthen its internal organization responsible for safety, adding that "DOE currently lacks a clear conceptual framework for addressing safety issues at the reactors."

The report also expressed concern about the effect of bugetary restrictions. "The Office of Management and Budget has adopted a strategy of requiring safety and programmatic needs to compete for the limited pool of federal dollars that has been allocated to the test and research reactors," the report said. "While this strategy may be justified by the need to restrain the growth of the federal budget, it could have adverse safety implications unless special vigilance is maintained."

[Copies of the report are available from the Commission on Physical Sciences, Mathematics and Resources, 2101 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20418.] ■

DOE Seeks Applicants For Research Grants

The Office of Energy Research in the US Department of Energy (DOE) is seeking applicants for a Special Research Grant Program in nuclear medicine, according to a Sept. 6, 1988, notice in the *Federal Register*.

The goal of the program is to develop new and improved methods and radiopharmaceuticals using nuclear science and technology in diagnosis, therapy and research. Ten to 15 awards of $150,000 a year are expected, with multiple-year grants awarded subject to the availability of funds.

Applications are due by January 8, 1989, for funding during fiscal year 1989. They should be forwarded to the US Department of Energy, Office of Energy Research, Division of Acquisition and Assistance Management, Room G-236, Washington, DC 20545, ATTN.: Program Notice 88-5.

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