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Newsletter



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER OF THE HEALTH PHYSICS SOCIETY

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NECHPS MEETING NOTICE

A Joint Meeting with the New England Chapter,
American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM)

Date: Thursday, February 7, 2002

Location: Papa Razzi's
16 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA

Time: 5:30 p.m. Registration/Cash Bar
6:30 p.m. Buffet Dinner
7:00 p.m. Guest Speaker

Topic: NCRP 49 Update – Controversy and Criticisms

Speaker: Doug Shearer, Ph.D., Medical Physics Department
Rhode Island Hospital

Menu: Hot Italian Buffet (a selection of pastas, meats and vegetables, coffee/tea and dessert)

Cost: \$30.00 Members, \$40.00 Non-Members, and \$15.00 Students

DIRECTIONS TO Pappa Razzi's (SEE REVERSE SIDE OF SHEET)

Registration Deadline is January 31, 2002.

Cancellations must be made before **January 31, 2002**, or you are responsible for payment.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Mail registration (with check to NECHPS) to: Ed Maher
42 Tuttle Drive
Acton, Massachusetts 01720

OR Register online at www.nechps.org OR call (978) 568-2785

OR E-mail Ed Maher at efmaher@dukeengineering.com

Directions to Restaurant Papa-Razzi in Wellesley

From the **west** take the Mass Pike to I-95 South

From the **north** take I-95 South

From the **south** take I-95 North

From **I-95 South** take the **RT-16 WEST** exit, exit **number 21A** (one exit south of the Mass Pike and 128/95 interchange) towards WELLESLEY.

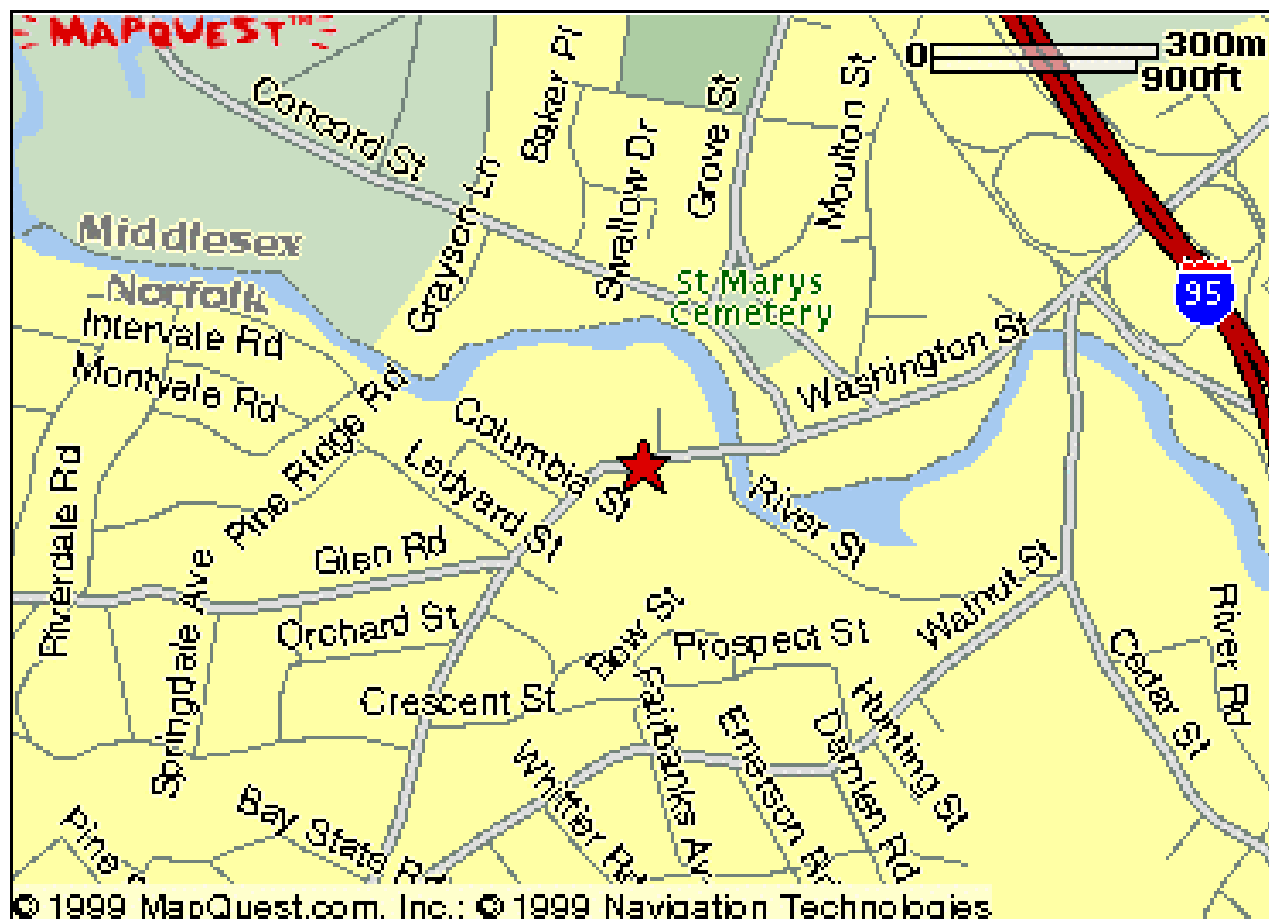
From **I-95 North** take Take the **RT-16 exit**, exit **number 21B**, towards NEWTON/WELLESLEY.
Turn **RIGHT** onto WASHINGTON ST.

Head west for about 0.6 miles.

The restaurant will be on your left.

There is parking alongside the restaurant which is normally full. If you drive through the Pappa Razzi parking lot there is additional municipal metered parking. In addition there is parking diagonally across Washington Street on the westbound side in the Grossman's parking lot (the Grossman's is closed)

Phone: 781 235 4747



Radioactive Material Hospitalizes 3

By MISHA DJINDZHIKHASHVILI
The Associated Press

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) - Three lumberjacks who found containers with highly radioactive materials in a forest were hospitalized in serious condition, and hundreds of villagers living nearby have been thrown into panic, officials said Saturday.

The two containers with strontium-90, believed to have been used in signal beacons during the construction of a nearby hydroelectric plant 30 years ago, were found sometime last month near the village of Dzhvare, about 135 miles southwest of the capital Tbilisi.

Experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency arrived in Tbilisi on Saturday to visit the site, said Soso Kukushadze, head of the radiation and nuclear security department of the Environment Ministry.

The area, about 550-yards in diameter, has been fenced off, Kukushadze said. A special task force was being assembled, but he warned that receiving the equipment to remove the strontium is a question of financing.

"We hope the government allocates the necessary money," Kukushadze said.

The containers are emitting radiation at a rate of 15 roentgens an hour from a distance of 5 feet - which is thousands of times higher than normal background radiation.

About 3,000 villagers live in the area, and many have started to report headaches and other symptoms, but Kukushadze dismissed the cases as "radiation phobia."

"There is absolutely no threat to the health of the residents of Dzhvare," Kukushadze said.

Free Meetings?!

Yes, you *can* have something for nothing. All members who submit articles to the NECHPS Newsletter receive a FREE TICKET to an evening Chapter meeting. The articles must be of interest to the membership.

The ticket is valid one year from the date of issue and is valid for yourself or a guest; however, it is not valid for the Annual Meeting.

Send some ideas and get a few pennies for your thoughts! The submission deadline for publication in February's *Newsletter* is February 15; send articles to tbandini@partners.org.

NECHPS Meeting Calendar 2002

March 14, 2002 - Joint meeting with AIHA on Laser Safety

Sheraton Tara - Lexington, MA

April 25, 2002 - Joint meeting with CCHPS with the HPS President-Elect

Providence Marriott

June 6, 2002 - NECHPS Annual meeting
Westford Regency

Japanese worker exposed to 1,000 times higher-than-normal radiation

TOKYO, Dec. 21 (Kyodo) - A 34-year-old company employee was exposed to 1,000 times the maximum annual permissible level of radiation at a Tokyo hospital Friday while setting up medical equipment, the science and technology ministry said.

The man, a worker of an affiliate of the medical instrument sales company Toshiba Medical Systems Co., was hospitalized after being exposed to an estimated 1 sievert of radiation around 9:30 a.m. at the National Okura Hospital in Setagaya Ward, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology said.

The ministry said the employee, who is receiving treatment at a hospital in Tokyo's Shinagawa Ward, has not developed any acute symptoms from radiation exposure such as nausea.

It also said although the man's white blood cell count will likely decrease over three weeks, the exposure will not be life-threatening.

Makoto Akashi, head of the emergency radiation exposure medical center at the National Institute of Radiological Sciences, however, said it is necessary to take measures to prevent his developing infection from the decrease in white blood cells.

The man, who does not normally handle radiation, was in the roof trying to hang the controller for the equipment from the ceiling when two Toshiba Medical employees activated the instrument for cancer treatment, which was in the room next door, in a test without realizing he was there, the ministry said.

He received x-rays 20,000 times as intense as the level for a medical checkup from three meters away for five minutes, according to the ministry.

Toshiba Medical officials said they have heard the man is in good shape, but he is scheduled to undergo a thorough examination at the national institute.

They also wondered why the two Toshiba Medical employees did not check to see if anyone was present before activating the instrument.

In Japan, the highest-level radiation exposure occurred in September 1999, when Hisashi Ouchi, a uranium-processing plant worker, was exposed to an estimated 17 sieverts of radiation in the country's worst nuclear accident in Tokaimura, Ibaraki Prefecture.

The radiation level was 17,000 times the maximum annual permissible exposure for people not working in nuclear or related facilities in Japan.

Ouchi's colleague Masato Shinohara was also exposed to an estimated 10 sieverts of radiation in the accident. Both Ouchi and Shinohara died of multiple organ failure in December 1999 and April 2000.

The Research Organization for Information Science and Technology also said workers were exposed to a maximum of 1.2 sieverts of radiation in 1971 while handling iridium, a radiation source, at a plant in Chiba Prefecture.

Membership Dues

Members are reminded that they should pay their dues *as soon as possible* to ensure that membership status remains in good standing. You may check your dues status by looking at the mailing label attached to this newsletter - the label will have a statement in the upper right corner: "Paid thru July 2001", for example.

Remember that the current By-Laws state that dues are \$10.00 per year, however, a payment of \$40.00 will get a member 5 years of Chapter membership.

Please send your payment to Ron Thurlow, NECHPS Treasurer, 21 Myrtle Ave, Newburyport, MA, 01950. Dues are always accepted and payable at the Chapter's technical meetings.

NECHPS Vendor Fair and Holiday Social Recap

The Annual NECHPS Vendor Fair and Holiday Social was another smashing success! The early December gathering provided many members a chance to catch up with each other, and it saw a few new faces as well.

John Anderson, Jr., the Affiliate Relations Chair, did a wonderful job of making the arrangements with Albert's Restaurant and recruiting the vendors. Many returning vendors turned out to display their products and services.

For those of you who attend past Holiday Socials, you will be happy to know that the "Clay French Rule" was once again enforced during the prize raffle. There was only one prize awarded per winner - which was almost the subject of debate when the DVD player was given away. Fortunately the incident was resolved peacefully.

As always, the food was superb and the attendees lacked for nothing. Albert's does a terrific job every year and makes the experience a pleasurable one for all. Many thanks to all who attended and made the evening such a delightful one.

State changes stance, orders 660,000 'nuclear pills'

By John McElhenny, Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) Public health officials have decided to stockpile hundreds of thousands of potassium iodide pills that protect against thyroid cancer in the event of a nuclear accident, despite a lingering fear that possessing the pills would distract people from evacuating.

The Department of Public Health requested the pills from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission on Wednesday, in a break from past policy.

Robert Hallisey, director of the DPH's Radiation Control Program, said the danger of terrorist attacks on the three nuclear power plants in or near Massachusetts had become too great.

"September 11th has changed the whole playing field,"

Hallisey said. "We have to take whatever plans and precautions we can."

Mary Lampert, who lives in Duxbury, seven miles across a stretch of open water from Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station, said she and others who live near plants should feel safer after the announcement.

"We've made a step," Lampert said. But she said the state should go one step further and distribute the pills to Cape Cod and other communities downwind from the power plants.

The DPH on Wednesday requested 660,000 potassium iodide pills from the NRC two for each Bay State resident who lives within 10 miles of the nuclear reactors in Plymouth, Seabrook, N.H. and Vernon, Vt.

That 10-mile radius includes 17 communities.

In the past, Massachusetts has stockpiled the pills only for emergency workers and people in prisons, nursing homes, or other institutions. State officials avoided more widespread stockpiling for fear people would not evacuate in case of an accident, believing the pills would protect them.

Potassium iodide, if taken shortly after exposure to radiation, blocks the thyroid gland's intake of radioactive iodine, providing protection against thyroid cancer and other diseases.

But iodine makes up only a small percent of any radiation release, health officials say for example, about .0017 percent of the radiation plume in the Three Mile Island reactor meltdown in 1979, Hallisey said.

"It just protects the thyroid gland against one isotope," said David Tarantino, spokesman at Pilgrim Station. "It certainly does not protect them from the vast majority of elements that would be released."

The NRC is offering the pills through a new program by which it provides the potassium iodide, known as KI, to states that request it. Massachusetts was the first state to request the pills, Hallisey said.

The pills cost the state nothing to buy, but there may be some cost to distribute them.

Hallisey said an important component of the KI pill distribution will be an educational campaign.

"We have to make it clear that it only protects you from radioactive iodine," he said. "We wouldn't want the evacuation process to be delayed while people look for their KI."