



Radiation Exposure Level and Effects

By Ronald L. Conte Jr.

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This booklet examines different levels of radiation exposure and their effects. The radiation might be from a nuclear power plant disaster, or a dirty bomb, or fallout from a nuclear explosion. The different levels of radiation are categorized by the associated negative health effects, risk of cancer, and risk of death. This booklet also proposes a new method of classifying radiation exposure level (REL), based on the range of accumulated dosage. Each level of exposure is designated by a letter, a word or phrase, a color code, and a range of accumulated radiation exposure in sieverts.

REL = Radiation Exposure Level (A through F3)

- A: Normal -- less than 15 mSv/year [green]
- B: Elevated -- 15 to 50 mSv [green]
- C: Caution -- 50 to 100 mSv [yellow]
- D: Danger -- 100 to 500 mSv [yellow]
- E: Emergency -- 500 to 1,500 mSv (0.5 to 1.5 Sv) [orange]
- F1: Fatality Threshold -- 1.5 to 2.0 Sv [red]
- F2: Many Fatalities -- 2.0 to 5.0 Sv [red]
- F3: near 100% Fatal -- 5.0 to 6.0 Sv and higher [black]

Later sections in the booklet discuss treatment for exposure to radioactive isotopes -- including radioactive iodine, cesium, plutonium, americium, curium, strontium, radium, and uranium -- using various Over-The-Counter and prescription medications. Of particular interest is possible treatment for exposure to certain radioactive isotopes using widely available OTC antacids and calcium supplements. The final section discusses the decision to evacuate an area, based on the anticipated Radiation Exposure Level.

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Endnotes

Information in the booklet is taken from a variety of authoritative and reliable sources, including: government agencies (Nuclear Regulatory Commission, EPA, CDC, FDA, HHS), the book Medical Implications of Nuclear War, the National Council on Radiation Protection, and various university and medical publications. If a radiation emergency occurs, this brief inexpensive booklet could help save your life.

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Radiation Exposure Level and Effects By Ronald L. Conte Jr. Bibliography

- Rank: #822476 in eBooks
- Published on: 2013-05-10
- Released on: 2013-05-10
- Format: Kindle eBook



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