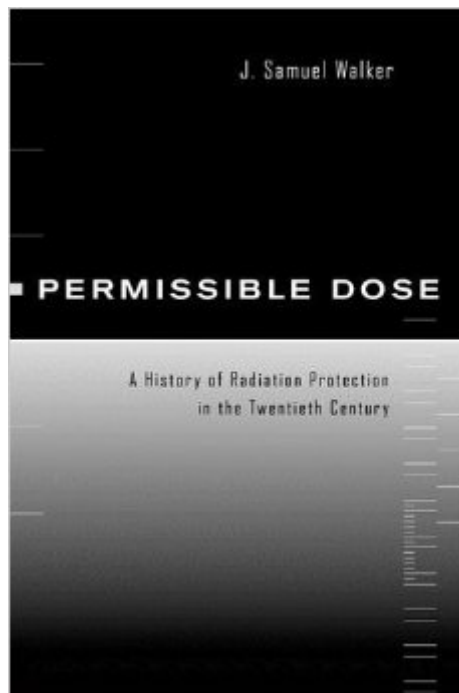


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Permissible Dose: A History Of Radiation Protection In The Twentieth Century



Synopsis

How much radiation is too much? J. Samuel Walker examines the evolution, over more than a hundred years, of radiation protection standards and efforts to ensure radiation safety for nuclear workers and for the general public. The risks of radiation—caused by fallout from nuclear bomb testing, exposure from medical or manufacturing procedures, effluents from nuclear power, or radioactivity from other sources—have aroused more sustained controversy and public fear than any other comparable industrial or environmental hazard. Walker clarifies the entire radiation debate, showing that permissible dose levels are a key to the principles and practices that have prevailed in the field of radiation protection since the 1930s, and to their highly charged political and scientific history as well.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have to start with the assumption that the reader has some interest in public health, regulation, environmentalism, health physics, or nuclear power since "Permissible Dose" is focused specifically on the evolution of radiation protection standards in the United States in the past century. This is not a book for a beginner looking to understand the biological effects of radiation. That said, "Permissible Dose" by J. Samuel Walker is a solid and readable history of a very specific topic. Well referenced, it is a surprisingly fast read, detailing the history of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and its successor, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), in its role to protect the health and safety of workers and the public. Walker is the historian of the NRC and he does an admirable job presenting the conflicts within the agency and without. Although the book was written in 2000,

most of the major controversies in radiation protection had been settled by that time, save the linear no-threshold theory which gets ample coverage in "Permissible Dose" To those familiar with regulation, it is not surprising to find most of the controversies in radiation protection are based more on intergovernmental turf battles and anti-nuclear politics rather than on evidence. Bitter feuds within the ICRP, for example, were over whether low-level radiation risk was "negligible or less-than-negligible". Important issues such as the dose received by temporary power plant workers are well represented in this history, showing that regulatory agencies were acutely aware of potential problems during the early growth period of nuclear power.

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