

Experience in implementing ICRP recommendations: IRPA's perspective on the role of the radiation protection professional

K.R. Kase

International Radiation Protection Association, clo CEPN, 28 rue de la Redoute, F92260, Fontenay-aux-Roses, France; e-mail: kr.kase@alumni.stanford.edu

Abstract—The International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) has a membership of approximately 17,000 individuals who are members of 48 national societies in 60 countries worldwide. As such, IRPA's vision is to be recognised as the international voice of the radiation protection professional. This article will discuss elements of the outcome of the 12th International Congress of IRPA ('Focus on the future'), objectives and current activities of IRPA, criteria and priorities for the engagement of IRPA with international organisations, current IRPA initiatives in the areas of radiation protection culture and certification/qualification of radiation protection experts, planning for the 13th International Congress of IRPA, comments on the implementation of recent recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP), and suggestions about IRPA and ICRP collaboration in their implementation.

IRPA recognises that ICRP is the international body to determine policy and to make recommendations for protection against ionising radiation, and IRPA is in a position to participate in and facilitate the implementation of those recommendations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) has a membership of approximately 17,000 individuals who are members of 47 national societies in 60

countries worldwide. It is important to recognise that IRPA is an international organisation that represents and engages the majority of radiation protection practitioners worldwide through its associate societies and congresses.

As such, IRPA's vision is that 'IRPA is recognized by its members, stakeholders and the public as the international voice of the radiation protection profession in the enhancement of radiation protection culture and practice worldwide'.

This discussion of experience in implementing the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) will be approached from the broad perspective of the role of radiation protection professionals and the activities of IRPA, beginning with the close of the International Congress in 2008.

This article will discuss elements of the outcome of the 12th International Congress of IRPA (IRPA12, 'Focus on the future'), objectives and current activities of IRPA, planning for IRPA13, comments on current ICRP recommendations, and conclusions about IRPA and ICRP collaboration in their implementation.

2. IRPA12 OUTCOME REPORT, 'FOCUS ON THE FUTURE'

Following IRPA12 in Buenos Aires in October 2008, IRPA – through the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) – published a detailed summary of the conclusions (IAEA, 2010). Some of the important conclusions are discussed under the topics of:

- developing the radiation protection framework;
- developing protection policies, criteria, methods, and culture;
- radiation safety; and
- emergency planning, preparedness, and response.

In the development of the radiation protection framework, IRPA12 concluded that the need to implement an international safety regime will challenge nations to build and maintain national infrastructures. This requires support in developing countries, where it is especially important to educate and train relevant personnel. National, regional, and international resources must be accessed to achieve greater effectiveness and to accelerate the implementation of international standards and recommendations. IRPA can be effective in recruiting these resources and in promoting better sharing of knowledge and experience.

Also important is the development of protection policies, criteria, methods, and culture. IRPA assists with these efforts through its congresses, which provide discussion forums, and its guiding principles documents. The IRPA Code of Ethics and its document on stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process can serve as guidance for policy development and operational methods.

Although a general decrease in occupational exposure has been observed in some industries, improved protection policies, criteria, methods, and culture are needed to affect a reduction of exposure in certain medical practices. Improved training and the promotion of a radiation protection and safety culture can result in better optimisa-

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