Working Safely Around Radioactive Contamination

EMERGENCY SERVICES

- Avoid contact with contaminants.
- Wear protective clothing (such as fire turnout gear, coveralls, gloves, and boots) that, if contaminated, can be removed.
- Use full respiratory protection if fire, smoke, fumes, gases, or windblown dusts are present.
- As soon as possible after proper care of the victim and resolution of the emergency situation, wash any part of you that may have come in contact with contamination.
- Assume that all materials, equipment and personnel have been contaminated if they were in the immediate area of the incident. Radiological monitoring is recommended before leaving the scene.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, rub eyes, or apply makeup within contaminated areas.
- If in doubt, assume contamination.
- Like dirt, most contamination washes off with soap and water.

HOSPITALS

- If in doubt, assume contamination.
- Avoid contact with contaminants.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in areas where radioactive materials are located.

PROVIDING EMERGENCY CARE

- Set up a controlled area large enough to hold the anticipated number of victims.
- Prevent tracking of contaminants by covering floor areas and monitoring exits of controlled areas.
- Restrict access to the controlled area.
- Monitor *anyone* or *anything* leaving the controlled area.
- Use strict isolation precautions, including double bagging and protective clothing. (Protective clothing such as gowns, caps, masks, boots, or gloves, if contaminated, can be removed.)
- Use a buffer zone or secondary control line for added security.
- Control waste by using large, plastic-lined containers for clothing, linens, dressings, etc.
- Control ventilation.
- Change instruments, outer gloves, drapes, etc., when they become contaminated.
- Use waterproof materials to limit the spread of contaminated liquids, for example, waterproof aperture drapes.

Most of this information is courtesy of US Government CDC. In times of an emergency much of this material may not apply when it comes to specialized care and testing. These are guidelines to help you when that care is not available. Some of this information is very technical and difficult to understand, but hopefully someone will be available for help in treatment and understanding.

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