



U.S. Radioisotope Supply

Position Statement

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The American Nuclear Society (ANS) supports a strong national policy to ensure a reliable domestic source of radioisotopes that is adequate to sustain the growing needs of U.S. health care, security, and industrial communities. If commercial organizations do not exist to meet this critical demand, it is our position that governmental agencies must accept the leadership responsibility to ensure a sufficient supply.

The potential consequences of shortages of radioisotopes for medical research, diagnosis, therapy, security, and industrial applications have been well documented in reports and hearings before Congress. In the United States alone, more than 15 million medical diagnostic procedures and several hundred thousand therapeutic treatments are conducted each year using radioisotopes. Additionally, countless nondestructive tests of materials and structures are performed with radioisotopes. Both commercial and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) reactor and accelerator facilities have provided radioisotopes in the past as a by-product of unrelated DOE missions. However, existing DOE reactors are either being shut down, or their primary missions are being scaled back to the extent that they can no longer adequately support the production of radioisotopes for medicine and industry. Promising research, especially in the fields of cancer treatment, is being delayed, postponed, or abandoned because of the unavailability of certain radioisotopes. Other needs for radioisotopes include the diverse operations of homeland security, industrial applications involving sterilization of hygiene products, and gauges for detecting microscopic levels of substances.

There is no present U.S. policy for the purpose of maintaining reliable sources of radioisotope supplies crucial for both medical and industrial applications. The impact of possible future shortages in the supply of radioisotopes would be severe on public health, industry, and security; hence, development and implementation of a comprehensive national policy is imperative to the national welfare. The ANS recommends that a national radioisotope program be established to ensure that critical radioisotope supply needs are evaluated and systematically addressed.

The American Nuclear Society, founded in 1954, is a not-for-profit scientific and educational society of over 10,500 scientists, engineers, and educators from universities, government and private laboratories, and industry.

Position Statements are the considered opinions and judgments of the Society in matters related to nuclear science and technology. They are intended to provide an objective basis for weighing the facts in reaching decisions on important national issues.