

Glossary

Condition Report (CR): A report that promptly alerts management to potential conditions that may be adverse to quality or safety. The report is generally initiated by a worker at the ISFSI facility. The report prompts management to activate a process to identify causal factors and document corrective and preventative measures stemming from the initial report.

Decay Series: There are three naturally occurring decay series of heavy elements that transform into a series of various radioactive elements by releasing energy in the form of particles, (such as alpha or beta), and/or gamma rays to end in a stable form of non-radioactive Lead. All three decay series start with extremely long lived radioactive, heavy elements that can be measured in geologic time units. They are Uranium-238 with an approximate half-life of 4.5 billion years, Uranium -235 with a half-life of about 700 million years, and Thorium-232 with a half-life of 14 billion years. All three series contain some more well-known radioactive species, Radium and Radon.

Dose is the amount of radiation that is absorbed by a person's body. In the radiation field the term dose is sometimes used interchangeably with dose equivalent, which is defined as the rem and described below.

fCi/m³ is an acronym for a femto-curie per cubic meter, which is a concentration unit that defines how much radioactivity is present in a particular air volume, such as a cubic meter. A curie, named after its discoverers Pierre and Marie Curie, is defined as the rate at which a radioactive element transforms itself into another element that is most often another radioactive element. It is mathematically equivalent to 37 billion disintegrations or transformations per second. A "femto" is a scientific prefix for an exponential term that is equivalent to one quadrillionth (1/1,000,000,000,000,000).

Half-life is a measure of how fast half the mass of a radioactive element will transform itself into another element. Each radioactive element has its own unique rate of transformation. Consequently, if a radioactive element, such as Iodine-131 has a half-life of 8 days, then in 8 days half of the original amount of Iodine-131 will be gone; in another 8 days half of that half will be left and so on.

Gamma Spectroscopy is a scientific method used to analyze gamma rays emanating from radioactive elements. The analytical system determines the gamma ray energy which acts as a "fingerprint" for specific radioactive materials. For example, Potassium-40 (K-40) has a very, distinctive gamma energy at 1460 keV. This uniqueness allows the instrument to positively identify the K-40 1460 energy as its own unique fingerprint. A keV is an abbreviation for kilo electron volt, which is a measure of energy at the atomic level. A kilo is a scientific prefix for the multiplier 1,000.

Gross Beta is a simple screening technique employed to measure the total number of beta particles emanating from a potentially radioactive sample, with higher values usually indicating that the sample contains natural and/or man-made radioactive elements. High values would prompt further analyses to identify the radioactive species. A beta is a negatively charged particle that is emitted from the nucleus of an atom with a mass equal to that of an orbiting electron.

Liquid Scintillation is an analytical technique by which Tritium and many other radioactive contaminants in water are measured. A sample is placed in a special glass vial that already contains a special scintillation cocktail. The vial is sealed and the container vigorously shaken to create a homogeneous mix. When the tritium transforms or decays it emits a very low energy beta particle. The beta interacts with the scintillating medium and produces a light pulse that is counted by the instrument. Although a different scintillation cocktail is used, this is basically how radon in well water is measured.

mrem or millirem is one thousandth (1/1000) of a rem. The rem is defined below.

milliRoentgen (mR) is one thousandth (1/1000) of a Roentgen, which is defined below.

pCi/kg is an acronym for a pico-curie per kilogram, which is a concentration unit that defines how much radioactivity is present in a unit mass, such as a kilogram. A “pico” is a scientific prefix for an exponential term that is equivalent to one trillionth (1/1,000,000,000,000).

pCi/L is an acronym for a pico-curie per liter, which is a concentration unit that defines how much radioactivity is present in a unit volume, such as a liter.

Rem is an acronym for roentgen equivalent man. It is a conventional unit of dose equivalent that is based on how much of the radiation energy is absorbed by the body multiplied by a quality factor, which is a measure of the relative hazard of energy transfer by different particles, (alpha, beta, neutrons, protons, etc.), gamma rays or x-rays. In comparison the average natural background radiation dose equivalent to the United States population is estimated to be 292 millirems per year, or 0.8 millirem per day, with 68 % of that dose coming from radon. A millirem is one thousandth, (1/1000), of a rem.

Roentgen is a special unit of exposure named after the discoverer of X-Rays, Wilhelm Roentgen. It is a measure of how much ionization is produced in the air when it is bombarded with X-Rays or Gamma Rays. Ionization is described as the removal of an orbital electron from an atom.

Skyshine is radiation from a radioactive source that bounces off air molecules in the sky, much like a cue ball does off the banking of a billiard table, and is scattered/redirected back down to the earth.

Thermoluminescent Dosimeters (TLD) are very small plastic-like phosphors or crystals that are placed in a small plastic cage and mounted on trees, posts, etc. to absorb any radiation that impinges on the material. Special readers are then used to heat the plastic to release the energy that was stored when the radiation was absorbed by the plastic. The energy released is in the form of invisible light and that light is counted by the TLD reader. The intensity of the light emitted from the crystals is directly proportional to the amount of radiation that the TLD phosphor was exposed to.

Tritium (Hydrogen-3 or H-3) is a special name given to the radioactive form of Hydrogen usually found in nature. All radioactive elements are represented as a combination of their chemical symbol and their mass number. Therefore, Tritium, which is a heavy form of the Hydrogen molecule with one proton and two neutrons in the nucleus of its atom, is abbreviated and represented by its chemical symbol, H, for Hydrogen and 3 for the number of particles in its nucleus, or mass number. Similarly, other radioactive elements, such as Potassium-40, can be represented and abbreviated as K-40, and so on.