Nuclear risk report low

By Storm Kluffman

With the risk of recombinant DNA associations with operating present-day nuclear power plants being so low, an updated report released yesterday by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Professor Norman Ramsey, head of the MIT Department of Nuclear Engineering, lead a three-year $3.5 million study WASH 1400. It estimated the risks to the public of the nuclear reactors.

In a news conference here yesterday afternoon, Ramsey said that, based on the findings of the study, he could see no reason for hesitancy in pursuing a nuclear program.

The final version of WASH 1400 differs from a draft version released in August, 1975, only by slightly increasing the assessed risks of nuclear plant operation, Ramsey said. But the overall conclusion that reactions are much safer than many non-nuclear activities remained the same.

The 1800 pages of comments received on the draft report.

Discussing the changes in the report, Ramsey said there were no major analyses of the "consequences" of potential accidents. On the average, the risk assessment showed nuclear power slightly safer than cancer originally estimated, but the statistics still showed cancer accidents involving compatible large-scale resource damage are about 100 times more likely than nuclear power plant accidents."

Rasmussen said. In addition, the report said, "the chance that a person living in the general vicinity of a nuclear power plant will be feebly injured in a reactor accident is one in 5 billion, per year, as compared to one in 4000 for a motor vehicle accident and one in 10,000 for a fall. Therefore, that a person will be injured in a reactor accident is one in 75 million per year," the report said.

All probabilities on nuclear reactor safety were based on operation of 100,000-megawatt, electric reactors near-twice, significantly more than the 50 reactors of equal size now in operation in the U.S. - the report said.

"The major change is the report's findings were in the area of fatal cancer statistics. Input from several critics resulted in a seven-fold increase in the estimates of fatal cancer to be expected in a worst-case accident, Rasmussen noted that even this increased probability would be barely discernible among the normal incidence of cancers. The original low estimate was the result of fallout to take account of $127, a fission product of uranium into account as a carcinogen in cancer, Rasmussen said."

Rasmussen also pointed out that the model for population evacuation in case of an accident had been modified in the final report as a result of criticism of the draft version. Using a study by the Environmental Protection Agency.

By Scott MacFarlane

The Soviet Union is standing in the way of scientific freedom by blocking emigration of scientists. This was made clear in a letter to Western scientists which was handed out at the meeting, and I have never met a person in my department who has, All the reports were published in open press and mostly abroad."

Goldfarb said he became involved in the Arms race movement to help "victimized" scientists, whose applications for emigration had been refused - and wrote letters to Western scientists which was handed out at the meeting.

Golfer said he felt that was because I was in possession of the Soviet Union to Israel, called on members of the MIT community to aid scientists who suffer harassment, loss of jobs, and intimidation because of their desire to emigrate, a seminar sponsored by MIT Hazlett and the Committee for Arab, Lerner and Levich.

Goldfarb, who will join the faculty of the Weizmann Institute of Technology in Israel next month, described his experience in getting out of the Soviet Union. His application for emigration to Israel, made in October 1973, was refused six months later on the grounds that it was "not in the interest of the state," in.

"It was later told it was denied because I was in possession of the WASH 1400 report," Goldfarb said. "I am not involved in the production of the document."

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