

RADIATION MEASUREMENT

Throughout the decades of decline of civil defense in the United States, one program remained relatively alive – radiological monitoring. When we first visited the National Emergency Training Center in Maryland (before our mobile civil defense shelter display was installed there), there were no items of actual civil defense equipment visible anywhere on the campus except for radiological monitoring equipment.

Even anti-civil defense agitators tolerated radiological monitoring because it could be represented as a response to the alleged dangers of nuclear power plant technology – a technology that they were attempting to demonize in the public mind.

In cooperation with State governments, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, provided thousands of radiation survey meters and dosimeters to each State, calibration equipment for keeping those meters in good repair, and continual courses in radiological monitoring for civilians and emergency preparedness personnel.

Under the Clinton Administration, this program is now being terminated. Soon, most of the emergency radiation monitoring equipment in the United States may cease to exist. FEMA is phasing out funding for this program. Individual states are gradually terminating their own involvement in accordance with local funding problems.

In Alaska, Fighting Chance supporter David Ways decided to take personal action. The State agreed to allow him to take possession of the equipment which was otherwise to be entirely destroyed. Arranging for storage at his own expense and with sponsorship from Fighting Chance and the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine, David Ways now has possession of Alaska's former inventory of thousands of radiation meters and dosimeters. They will remain in his possession for distribution to the people of Alaska if they are ever needed.

We strongly recommend that Fighting Chance supporters in other states communicate with their state emergency preparedness office about similar possibilities. First, urge your state officials to continue the radiological meter inventory program under state auspices. Second, ask the radiological monitoring officials to allow you to take possession of the state meters if they are discarded. Talk with them occasionally so that you will not be forgotten if the need arises. In that event, if it is of help to have a sponsoring organization, please let us know. We can help in this way, as we did with David Ways. Since the Oregon Institute of Science and Medicine is a non-profit public foundation, meters stored by us remain public property.

For this storage of meters to be most effective, a civilian procedure must be developed to calibrate the meters occasionally. The current calibration devices include a radioactive source and belong to FEMA. Some of these are being returned to FEMA. It should not be difficult, however, to arrange a calibrating effort in the future. The most important priority is to **assure that the survey meters and dosimeters in your state are not destroyed**. Once they are destroyed, the expense of replacement will be far too great for an ordinary civilian effort. Each state has several thousand meters. They are compact and easily stored. If you cannot find space, we are willing to arrange to ship them to Oregon for storage at this Institute.