

The Society for Radiological Protection

SRP4 (07) - Press Release

Embargoed until 00.01 Tuesday 24th April 2007

Health Protection Agency's Response to Polonium-210 Incident

The Polonium-210 incident, which resulted in the death of Alexander Litvinenko, was an unprecedented event in the UK, making headlines across the globe. Mr John Croft of the Health Protection Agency will report today in a special presentation at Keele University.

He will give a key talk at the Society for Radiological Protection's two day meeting on National and International Developments in Radiation Protection where recent advances and their potential impact will be examined, along with developments in waste management, skills and training.

Mr Croft will explain the potential risks to members of the public who might have been exposed to radiation. This was an unprecedented event in the UK and brought together specialists from a wide range of fields in an integrated national effort. The aftermath of the incident lasted many weeks and required a sustained response from the Health Protection Agency working with its multi-agency partners.

The presentation will address how the Agency's radiation scientists rapidly developed a mass urine testing process, supplied and co-ordinated teams to monitor a wide range of locations, and deployed scientific expertise in the public health investigation. Mr Croft will describe how the Agency's public health teams worked with NHS Direct in following up hundreds of people who were potentially at risk, and its emergency planners co-ordinated the HPA's efforts and worked closely with Government departments, the police and other public bodies. He will conclude by describing how the Agency's communications staff worked with the media on this high profile issue to ensure the public received up to date information; and how the whole operation was supported by a range of experts from other divisions of the Agency.

Notes for Editors

1. Mr John Croft's talk 'Polonium Poisoning Incident' will be given at 16.30 today, Tuesday 24th April 2007, at the Society for Radiological Protection's scientific meeting 'National and International Developments in Radiation Protection' held at Keele University, Staffs. The meeting will be held on 24th and 25th April 2007.

2. John Croft is Head of Emergency Response at the Health Protection Agency's (HPA's) Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response, Porton Down, near Salisbury. He has many years of experience in dealing with radiation incidents, including leading a number of international missions to review radiation accidents. In his current post he has been responsible for developing HPA's overarching emergency response arrangements to deal with a wide range of incidents, such as Avian influenza, Chemical incidents and terrorist events.

3. The presentation will review HPA's involvement in the response to the Litvinenko Polonium-210 poisoning incident. The views expressed during the presentation are solely those of the speaker. For media enquiries, please contact HPA CRCE press office on 01235 822737 or 01235 822744/822745 or HPA London press office on 020 7759 2824.

Further information on Polonium-210 may be found in the Journal of Radiological Protection, in the paper J Harrison, R Leggett, D Lloyd, A Phipps, B Scott. Polonium-210 as a Poison. *J Radiol Prot* 2007; **27**: 17-40,

http://ej.iop.org/links/rwGT92luw/cPacMZDu2xGGUkW7av5vpA/jrp7_1_001.pdf. The paper is

accompanied by an editorial entitled "The Polonium-210 Poisoning in London" by Dr John Stather, <http://www.iop.org/EJ/abstract/0952-4746/27/1/E02> .

4. The Journal of Radiological Protection is published by Institute of Physics Publishing (see <http://www.iop.org/>) and is the house journal of the UK 's Society for Radiological Protection (see <http://www.srp-uk.org/>).

5. Accredited journalists are welcome to free registration to attend this meeting. Please contact Tessa Harris, SRP Administrator Tel. +44 (0)1364 644487, fax. +44 (0)1364 644492, email: admin@srp-uk.org if you would like to attend.

6. Further information on the meeting can be found at the Society for Radiological Protection's web site www.srp-uk.org.

7. Founded in 1963, the Society for Radiological Protection is the Scientific Society in the UK that covers the whole field of radiation protection. It now has nearly 2000 national and international members, who are professionally concerned with safety aspects of the use of ionising and non-ionising radiation in education, central and local government, industry, medicine and research.

8. The Society has the following objectives:-

- to promote and advance the science of radiological protection and allied fields;
- to promote, advance and disseminate to the public advantage, knowledge of radiological protection and allied fields;
- to encourage, support, promote and advance education and learning in radiological protection and allied fields;
- to promote and encourage high scientific, educational, regulatory and professional standards in radiological protection and allied fields.

9. This press release was written for the Society for Radiological Protection by Julie Williams and distributed for the SRP by the Institute of Physics Press Office.

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