



Benefits of a Radiation Protection Society

Why should I belong to, or create, a Radiation Protection Society? The many benefits to radiation protection practitioners, employing organisations and society in general resulting from active participation in national/regional Radiation Protection Societies are rarely articulated, and as a consequence many of the benefits are not realized in practice. This IRPA guidance note aims to articulate the reasons for the existence of our Societies, in the hope that it will both encourage existing societies to enhance their membership and maximize their benefits, and also stimulate radiation protection professionals in countries without a society to work with colleagues to establish such a society.

There are two related questions common to all radiation protection societies and to professionals engaged in radiation protection:

- Why create a national/regional Radiation Protection Society?
- As an individual practitioner, why should I join a Radiation Protection Society?

There are many reasons to form a society and for individual practitioners to become involved, and they can be regarded as falling into four categories as follows:

1. The Benefits of Creating and Belonging to a Radiation Protection Society

Basic benefits of a Society:

- Mutual support and encouragement for the radiation protection practitioners in your country/region:
 - o Sharing experiences and best practice, providing access to fellow professionals for cooperation and advice
 - o Assistance with education, training and personal development to advance the knowledge and understanding of members in the field of radiation protection
- Establishing a programme of scientific and technical meetings and discussion forums on topics and issues relevant to your country/region
- Advancing radiation protection practice and standards in your country/region, thereby improving the overall standard of radiological safety through enhanced professional competence

- Sharing information on radiation protection issues and developments within your country/region, including access to society newsletters, journals and other publications.

At a more advanced level (as a Society develops):

- Development of recognised training programmes for radiation protection professionals, and the promotion of a good radiation protection culture
- Recognition of competence to practice radiation protection, for example to undertake roles required in regulations such as a Radiation Protection Expert, through the formation of assessment schemes, where relevant recognised by the appropriate national authorities
- Formulation of sectorial groups e.g. nuclear, medical, education, research, non-ionising etc. for sharing of information/good practice and the development of sector specific guidance etc.
- A forum for interaction between radiation protection practitioners and government, regulatory authorities and relevant professional organisations, particularly in the context of developing national law and regulations and issues relating to professional standards and competence.
- Promoting public understanding and awareness of radiation risk
- Information and assistance on career development and opportunities, including access to experienced professionals for guidance and mentoring
- Advice and opportunities for developing presentational and speaking skills
- Development of guidance notes and standards of good practice on professional radiation protection activities.
- Provide organisations using radiation with access to a database of qualified Radiation Protection Experts in specific sectors

2. The Benefits of Cooperation at an International Level through IRPA

IRPA is an international association of individual radiation protection practitioners joining through national or regional societies. It promotes excellence in national and regional associate societies and in radiation protection professionals by providing support, guidance, benchmarks of good practice, exchange of information, and by facilitating networking to ensure that the highest standards of professional conduct, skills and knowledge are applied for the benefit of society. Our Vision is to be recognized by our members and stakeholders as the international voice of the radiation protection profession in the enhancement of radiation protection culture and practice worldwide

Through membership of IRPA, radiation protection professionals and the national/regional Associate Societies have an enhanced opportunity for:

- Influencing the development of radiation protection practice and international standards through IRPA's involvement with key international organizations such as ICRP, IAEA, EU, ICRU, WHO, ILO and many others.
- Engagement with developing experience of excellence and good practice within the profession. IRPA has active programmes for sharing and promoting experiences in many fields, currently

including Stakeholder Engagement, Training and Qualifications, Radiation Protection Culture, Public Understanding, and Ethics, amongst other issues.

- Sharing radiation protection experiences at a range of IRPA-sponsored international meetings, including international and regional congresses and topic-specific discussions.
- Working with other radiation protection societies in your region to share best practice, common problems, address regional issues and establish important communication channels.
- Access to IRPA and other Associate Society newsletters, bulletins and journals (either free of charge or at a reduced subscription rate)
- Improving understanding of how radiation protection issues are managed worldwide and in turn how individual countries/regions can feed into and affect this process.
- Supporting the development of new or emerging radiation protection professional societies in lesser developed parts of the world in order to embed good radiation protection practices, often in challenging circumstances.

3. Benefits for the Employer when an Employee belongs to a Radiation Protection Society

Where employing organisations believe that they benefit from their staff belonging to Radiation Protection Societies, they are more likely to be encouraging and supportive of their staff's involvement. Benefits to employers can include:

- Greater assurance that staff are keeping up to date with developments in radiation protection, and that they will be more aware of good practices within other organisations
- Greater confidence that staff are aspiring to the highest professional standards
- Staff access to peer review of their competence and professionalism
- A demonstration to customers, stakeholders and external bodies that staff are aiming to practice at the highest levels
- Better access to acknowledged leaders in the field
- Staff have opportunities to attend seminars, lectures and conferences for their professional development, often at reduced cost compared to non-members, or even with bursary support from the Society or related organisations
- Many other opportunities for staff to pursue professional development in their career
- Staff have opportunities, working through the Society, to influence the development of legislation and guidance at national and international level
- Staff have greater awareness of the importance of public communication and engagement on radiation issues, and have access to communication techniques and good practices.

4. The Benefits to National Authorities

- Societies provide a focus for Authorities to interact with practitioners
- National Authorities need to recruit staff with practical and technical experience and/or train staff in these areas. Societies can help facilitate this.
- Society activities, such as arranging scientific meetings, can provide important elements for the Continuing Professional Development of Authority staff.
- The work of Societies can provide early identification of issues that National Authorities may need to develop policies on.
- Many regulators are active members of Societies, and this provides opportunities for both the regulators and the practitioners to understand each other's driving forces. This can prevent, or ameliorate, any "us and them" attitudes.

Conclusion

There are many benefits to radiation protection practitioners, employing organisations and society in general from active participation in national/regional Radiation Protection Societies. These benefits are rarely articulated, and hence IRPA Associate Societies are encouraged to be more active in their promotion activities.

Approved by the IRPA Executive Council - June 2015