

## **Will they ever learn? The public education game**

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### **ABSTRACT**

We as health physicists have much at stake in the public education arena. In spite of our efforts, the public has been slow to warm to the use of radiation and radioactive material, except perhaps for some medical applications. Recently we are beginning to see a trend toward greater acceptance of nuclear power, probably driven largely by the exorbitant cost of oil and the perception that we are being held hostage to foreign suppliers of same.

Now may be the time to strike with all deliberate haste with maximum use of available resources to educate the public about radiation risks. The specter of terrorist attacks using radiological or nuclear weapons resulted in a great dissemination of knowledge about radiation to emergency response personnel of all ilk around the country. The further prospects of a nuclear power renaissance should produce a thirst for additional knowledge by many other stakeholders.

The Health Physics Society (HPS) is well postured to deliver the credible, scientifically accurate information that the public seeks. Our recent restructuring efforts within the HPS have produced an organization that is more effective, efficient and productive than ever. We have made great strides in improving our responsiveness to educational gaps/needs through several current initiatives such as the Radiation Primer. Several other education initiatives are within our grasp. Allied with other organizations and agencies that share our interests and concerns, we have the opportunity to raise our public education profile even further. Your voluntary participation at both the national and the chapter levels will make a huge difference in just how successful we will be over the next few years.