

Joint Budget Hearing Texas Department of Health
Friday, September 6, 2002

Michael Ford, CHP, Vice Chair, testified on behalf of the Texas Radiation Advisory Board making these comments:

Bureau of Radiation Control (BRC) budget, at the minimum, should be maintained at current levels.

Fees going into General Revenue should be recaptured and dedicated to BRC.

Increased efficiency, suggested by Commissioner Sanchez, is a worthwhile goal. However, persons in the support functions at BRC also work in emergency response activities. It is important for BRC to maintain those capabilities and this should be considered in regard to consolidations of functions within TDH.

Change in mammography fees would be because FDA is turning over the certification process to the state. Currently, the state would not be able to collect fees for that and allow the capture of fees for that program. The fees will actually be somewhat less (a lower cost to the facility) if the state performs this activity instead of the federal government.

Radiation Perpetual Care Fund needs to allow for deposits of a 5% fee that was authorized last session. (This would correct a problem with the legislation.) It would allow for the fund to be maintained in order to deal with various contaminated properties or abandoned radioactive sources when the emergency need arises.

As an exceptional item, a program for laser regulation should be authorized. Noted incidents have occurred when injury resulted from improper use of devices and a regulatory program is needed.

Health physicists' salaries should be increased. This would somewhat address the retention and recruitment problems the state is having. Health physicists are specialists in radiation safety. The state depends on them for responses to concerns related to 9/11 such as "dirty nukes" and other threats. Additionally, routinely they are needed for the regulatory program to inspect and regulate other radiation uses, such as radiation services at health care providers.