

# Nuclear Health Physicist Insures Reactor Safety

A&M University's towering Nuclear Science Center is a safe place. A soft-spoken, young man of 30 with crew-cut blonde hair sees to that.

He is Jim Davis of Webster, who in the nuclear world is known as a health physicist.

His type of job is just now coming to the forefront as an occupation sparkling with opportunity. Demand is great in this highly specialized field. Institutions and industry dealing in almost any kind of nuclear energy can't find enough people trained in the work.

**WHAT IS a health physicist?**  
To some, the name may suggest a person who uses nuclear energy in medical research. Actually, he is a kind of nuclear safety engineer, a man who constantly checks equipment and surroundings to make sure they are safe for researchers and others in the area.

If there is a radiation leak, which is very rare, it's the health physicist's chore to detect the trouble before there is real danger and then correct it.

To Davis, there is nothing glamorous about the work. But he says it is highly interesting, rewarding, and strictly necessary when there are radioactive materials around.

HE SAID danger is not likely to come from the reactor itself. Instead, the materials it produces, such as isotopes for research, can be dangerous if handled wrongly. Davis heads off such trouble by making sure researchers know what they've got hold of.

A typical day on the job for Davis would run about like this:

Before anyone else arrives in the morning, he checks the reactor building to see if it's safe to enter. He uses an air monitor to detect any radioactivity in the air and ferret out radiation leaks.

Then Davis takes air samples in and outside the building to determine if they are the same. Sometimes, natural radiation in the atmosphere confuses the picture.

## Seminar Records Available Now

Proceedings of the First Annual Right of Way Educational Refresher Seminar held August 7-8-9 at A&M University under the sponsorship of the Texas Transportation Institute and Region Two of the American Right of Way Association are now available through the Publications Office, Texas Engineering Experiment Station, A&M University.

Included in the publication are speeches delivered by notables in the right of way profession and related fields.

Main topics for discussion during the seminar included mapping and land descriptions, land law and titles, communications, forms and appraisals.

NEXT, HE checks calibrations of monitoring equipment, which is stationed at strategic locations in the reactor building. These machines are electronic watchdogs, ever-ready to tattle on radiation leaks.

After other routine inspections, Davis takes a sample of water from the reactor pool and tests for radioactivity. The pool is a coolant for the reactor.

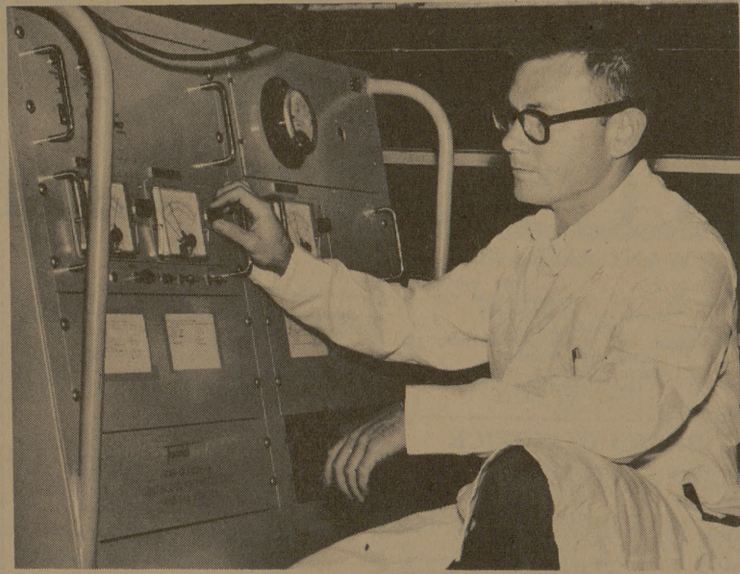
The nuclear physicist also performs weekly tests. He calibrates his instrument, using cobalt-60 as a standard. Then he looks for removable surface contamination by taking "smears" from floors and walls. Records are kept on amounts of radiation exposure of individuals.

ONCE A month, Davis inspects the premises around the reactor, and he collects accumulated radioactive wastes and sees to their proper disposal.

Davis says the most interesting part of his job is the collection of environmental samples in and around the building to identify radioactive material.

"It's not always easy," he said. "I have to hark back to my training in chemistry, mathematics and physics at the University of Texas."

Davis described the reactor as a taut operation, built under strict specifications and operated under even stricter regulations. The Atomic Energy Commission says it has to be this way.



**INSTRUMENT TELLS RADIATION STORY**  
Jim Davis checks air monitor

## Mental Health Organization Appoints Skrabanek To Serve

Professor R. L. Skrabanek of A&M University has accepted an appointment to the sub-committee on epidemiology of mental illness within the statewide organization now formulating plans for meeting long term mental health needs of communities all over Texas. Dr. Skrabanek's particular competence in this field will be of great assistance to this statewide citizens' committee.

EACH COMMITTEE member will serve on one of 13 task forces to study particular areas in the mental health field.

The Texas plan is part of a coordinated national effort to deal effectively with the growing incidence of mental health and emotional disorders, said to be the nation's number one health problem.

Leaders of the Texas planning movement said their efforts were designed as a means of meeting the state's needs for mental health

services in coming years. They said it would take from 18 months to two years to write guidelines from which local communities could determine their needs and make decisions as to the best ways to obtain additional health services for their people.

THE GOALS of this proposal are: (1) to establish a means by which a comprehensive plan for mental health may be developed to preserve, protect, and promote the mental health of all Texans; (2) to prevent the development of mental illness; (3) to limit the progress of mental illness once established; (4) to prevent the disability that may appear in those who have been mentally ill; (5) to so involve the professional, citizen, and governmental leadership of the State in the formulation of this comprehensive plan that these leaders will assume the responsibility for its effective implementation.

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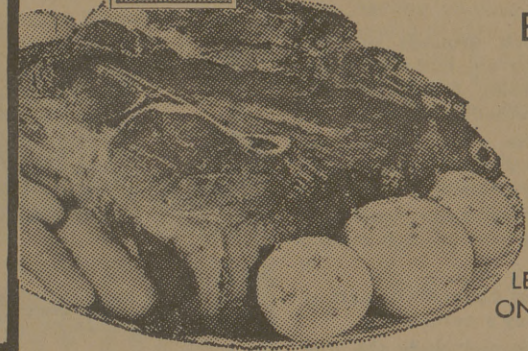
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