RADIOLOGICAL EXPOSURE DEVICE

What is a Radiological Exposure Device?

Radioactive material or an object containing radioactive material can expose people to radiation without their knowledge. Such objects are called Radiological Exposure Devices (REDs), or hidden sealed sources.

REDs may be hidden in public places (e.g., under a subway seat, in a food court, or in a busy hallway). People who sit near or pass close to the RED may be exposed to radiation.

What are the main dangers of a Radiological Exposure Device?

The dangers of a RED depend on three factors: 1) the type and amount of radioactive material used; 2) how long a person spends near the device; and 3) what parts of a person's body are exposed to radiation coming from the device.

People exposed to high levels of radiation can develop symptoms of Acute Radiation Syndrome (ARS). They can also develop radiation burns. Health effects may take hours, days, or weeks to appear. These effects can range from mild to severe (e.g., cancer or death). Some people may not experience any health effects.

What should I do to protect myself?

Report a suspected RED to law enforcement officials immediately. Stay as far away from the suspected object as possible.

If a RED is identified and you believe you have been exposed, listen for instructions from emergency officials and contact your doctor.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

http://emergency.cdc.gov/radiation