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In contrast to
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White House Offers Guides On Regulating Carcinogens

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WASHINGTON, May 22 — The White House Office of Science and Technology today issued its final draft of a report intended to serve as a guide to Federal agencies in regulating cancer-causing substances.

The report resulted from a two-year Administration effort to establish a uniform Federal policy on carcinogens. It was praised by environmentalists and public health scientists who had complained that earlier drafts were designed to ease restrictions on industry and permit a substantially greater amount of cancer-causing substances in the nation's air, water, food supplies and workplaces.

The report was described by the White House office as a "state of the science" description of cancer-causing agents and how they affect human health. They present a set of principles to be used by Federal agencies in assessing the risks of cancer-causing substances and what should be done about those risks.

The new guidelines do not depart radically from current approaches to cancer regulation used by Federal agencies, and several scientists who reviewed the document said the proposed guidelines would not lead to any significant loosening of rules to protect the public from cancer-causing agents.

George A. Keyworth 2d, President Reagan's science adviser, said the report "responds to society's need for better balance and objectivity in how we regulate man-made and naturally occurring chemicals that may cause cancer."

The report is different from the heavily criticized earlier drafts in at least three major respects.

The first is that it states flatly that a substance that can cause cancer in animals "should be considered a suspected human carcinogen." Earlier, the Administration appeared to be questioning the validity of animal test data in deciding whether a substance caused cancer.

'Threshold' Approach Discarded

Secondly, the earlier approach raised the possibility that there were varying "thresholds" at which each cancer-causing substance presented a risk to human health. That approach has been abandoned in the final draft on the ground that science is still unable to determine those thresholds for regulatory purposes, and the new guidelines continue to assume that any exposure to a cancer-causing substance, no matter how low, conveys a measurable risk of cancer.

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