



## Book Reviews

*Element of Risk: The Politics of Radon*, by Leonard A. Cole, AAAS Press, Washington, DC, 1993, ix + 246 pages, price US\$ 29.95, ISBN 0-87168-513-2

This book traces the development of indoor radon policy in the United States from the perspective of the political arena, emphasizing the diverse attitudes of radon policy shapers. The major radon policy influences explored are those of elected officials, federal and state regulators, the scientific community, public and private interest groups, the press, and the American political culture. Leonard Cole guides the reader through this maze of perspectives and shows how public policy emerges from conflicting views, hidden agendas, scientific uncertainty, questionable extrapolations, fear, ignorance, and unethical behavior. Significant historical events involving radon provide the backdrop for the focus of the book: an evaluation of the past political approach to indoor radon policy and a suggestion for a new direction.

Throughout this book the reader gains an awareness of the complexity of policy making at the cost of blissful innocence, the unwavering confidence that the deliberations of policy makers are conducted with integrity and competence. The reader learns that lurking beneath the surface of an apparently straightforward national radon policy are officials of one federal agency bickering with those of another; respected scientists advocating disparate views; and a myriad of elected officials, environmental activists, radon testers and remediators, realtors, lawyers, and citizens staunchly clinging to their own agendas. As if adding insult to injury, the reader discovers that scientific evidence, or the lack thereof, does not necessarily play a critical role in policy making.

A bonus toward the end of the book is a glance at the policies and attitudes concerning radon in Sweden and Finland, two other countries with activist environmental values. Cole reviews the Finnish and Swedish approaches to radon policies within the context of government and cultural values and finds striking similarities, as well as many differences, to the American approach. Some opinions highlighted in this chapter hint that perhaps the United States could learn from her Nordic friends, particularly in the area of temperance regarding aggressive environmental policy making when there are uncertain risks and government scare tactics aimed to shock the public into action. In the final chapter, Cole makes a plea for forthrightness: "Openness should override even the most sincere conviction that any individual or agency knows better what is good for the people than the people know for themselves."

The book is not for the individual looking for conclusive evidence that exposures to low levels of radon cause increased risk of cancer in humans, or a detailed analysis of the studies that support or refute that claim. An early chapter provides the nonspecialist with sufficient technical background to grasp the scientific underpinnings of the political debate. Easily accessible, interesting, and eye-opening, the book would be of interest to anyone following the radon debate, homeowners, scientists, policy makers, and citizens concerned about the allocation of their tax dollars.

K.A. WILBERT

*Air Pollution Control and Design for Industry*, edited by P.N. Cherimisinoff, Marcel Dekker, New York, NY, 1993, 589 pages, price US\$ 150, ISBN 0-8247-9057-X

Having taught a course on air pollution control, I have very definite ideas of what should be in an air pollution control text. And although the book was not designed as a course text, but rather as an industrial source design guidebook, I evaluated it from the point of view of a university instructor.

Technically, this is a very good book, with both the theory and practical applications of air pollution control discussed. It is well written, clear and concise, yet comprehensive. Its 17 chapters (many written by the editors, but with others contributed by industrial environmental engineers) covers all aspects of air pollution control:

- Pollution control devices: settling chambers, cyclones, baghouses, electrostatic precipitators
- Gaseous control devices: adsorbers, absorption (scrubbers), incinerators.
- Stacks
- Sampling
- Odor control
- Indoor air pollution
- Plant compliance for managers

I was impressed by the techniques used by the authors in writing this industrial design book because they basically used an academic approach by starting with the basic principles underlying the technology, developing the equations needed, and then using these equations in a completely worked out example. I shall include several (i.e., that govern the removal principles in the process) of these examples in my class the next time I teach it.

The authors did cover several topics the other 'academic texts' I have used did not: sampling and analysis, indoor air quality, air cleanup and water pollution control and industrial odor control.

Having described the many fine points of the book, I must balance this with a complaint; references. There are few to none in most chapters. I cannot accept this and the authors should correct this deficiency in future editions.

Not a deficiency (because the book was not designed as a text) but an opportunity to make this very good book a text — the authors could add homework problems in another edition of the text or as an academic supplement. I think, they would find