

The College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan Radiation and Imaging Standard

Legislation

Radiation safety has long been a priority in Saskatchewan. This province, the first in Canada to have radiation safety legislation, passed *The Radiological Health Act* on March 15, 1961. The Act underwent a major revision in 1985 at which time it was renamed *The Radiation Health and Safety Act, 1985*. As well as protecting operators of radiation equipment, the Act was designed to protect patients and the general public from excessive radiation exposure. *The Radiation Health and Safety Regulations, 2005* are the result of collaborative work by the provincial Radiation Health and Safety Committee, owners and users of radiation equipment, other stakeholders and the public.

CDSS Members

Members 'connected' to and operating in CDSS approved Dental Facility must ensure that radiation exposure to staff, patients and the public in general is kept as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA principle).

The Radiation Health and Safety Act (Appendix 1) and Regulations (Appendix 2) require the following in dental clinics:

Dental Clinic

1. "Dental Clinic" means a place in which radiation equipment is used by or under the direction of a dentist, as defined in The Dental Disciplines Act, for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes with respect to a patient. (*The Radiation Health and Safety Regulations, 2005*)

Approval

2. An accurate plan of the proposed installation or alteration must be submitted and approval obtained from the Radiation Safety Unit prior to installation or alterations.

Certification

3. Prior to turning the x-ray equipment over to the owner, the vendor or installer of the equipment must complete an electrical and mechanical inspection of the x-ray unit and perform a calibration of the x-ray equipment to certify that the unit meets all specifications. A copy of the report must be submitted to the owner and the Unit within thirty days of the installation. This applies to the installation of both new and used x-ray units.

Registration

4. The x-ray unit(s) must be registered with the department using the prescribed form, within one month of the installation or its alteration. It must subsequently be re-registered each year.

Qualifications

5. Only those persons adequately trained qualify to operate dental x-ray equipment.

Quality Assurance

6. The owner must establish a quality assurance program to ensure the safe operation of the equipment and diagnostic quality of the images.

Inspections:

7. The owner must arrange for each x-ray unit to receive a Safety Preventive Maintenance (SPM) inspection by a qualified service person at least once every three years.

Safety:

8. The owner and/or operator must make sure that adequate safety precautions are taken to ensure that patients, general public and staff are not unnecessarily exposed to ionizing radiation.

Ionizing Radiation Installation

8. "Ionizing Radiation Installation" means the whole or any part of a building or other place in which ionizing radiation equipment is manufactured, used or placed or installed for use, and includes that ionizing radiation equipment;

Owner

9. "Owner" means a person having management and control of a radiation installation or radiation equipment, or both;
10. An owner of dental ionizing radiation installation or any ionizing radiation equipment used for diagnosis or treatment relating to human beings shall ensure that each operator is a dentist, dental assistant, dental hygienist or dental therapist as each is defined in The Dental Disciplines Act ; or a student who is under the direct supervision of a person who possesses the qualifications set out above.
11. No person shall manage or control (own) an ionizing radiation installation or any ionizing radiation equipment used for diagnosis or treatment relating to human beings unless the person:
 - (a) is qualified pursuant to an Act to provide persons with care and treatment by means of ionizing radiation equipment; or
 - (b) employs an individual who meets the requirements of clause (a) to attend to the operation of the ionizing radiation installation or ionizing radiation equipment (Dentists cannot be employed by other than CDSS members, a CDSS dental professional corporation, a CPSS physician or a DDA s25 Agency pursuant to Bylaw 3.??; Assistants, Hygienists and Therapists cannot be employed by other than Dentists or a DDA s25 agency pursuant to the DDAs25).
12. No person shall manage or control an ionizing radiation installation or ionizing radiation equipment that is used for a purpose other than diagnosis or treatment relating to human beings or animals unless:
 - (a) the person:
 - (i) Understands the procedures for which the equipment is to be used;

- and (ii) possesses the knowledge necessary to adequately manage or control the ionizing radiation installation or ionizing radiation equipment and knowledge of the necessary safety procedures; or
- (b) Employs an individual who meets the requirements of clause (a) to attend to the operation of the ionizing radiation installation or ionizing radiation equipment.

Ionizing Radiation Equipment

13. "Ionizing Radiation Equipment" means a device capable of emitting ionizing radiation, but does not include:
- (i) equipment operated at less than 15 kilovolts and not designed principally to produce useful radiation;
 - (ii) equipment that is in storage, in transit or not being used or equipment operated in such a manner that it cannot produce radiation;
 - (iii) any radioactive substance; or
 - (iv) any other equipment or class of equipment specified in the regulations;

Operators

14. "operator" means a person who uses or controls the use of any radiation equipment;
15. All operators must know of radiation hazards and be able to adequately protect themselves, patients and others.
16. All operators must have an adequate knowledge of radiation physics, techniques and their own equipment to be able to produce radiographs of diagnostic quality with the least patient exposure practicable.
17. All operators must be of 18 years of age or older.
18. All operators must be licensed or certified according to a standard recognized by the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan.
19. Any female operator who suspects she is pregnant should inform her employers and together with him/her ensure that for the remainder of her pregnancy her duties are compatible with minimum radiation exposure.

Operators-In-Training

20. All operators-in-training or inexperienced operators must work only under direct supervision of an experienced operator. Operators beginning training at an age less than 18 years must not receive an annual dose equivalent exceeding 1.5 rem (15 mSv).

Building and Equipment

21. All aspects of equipment manufacture or import installation and shielding must conform to the Federal and Provincial Acts and Regulations that govern these items.

Films and Processing

22. Digital Radiation equipment is recommended.
23. In installations using film, High speed film (E,F speed) must be used
24. Films should be stored in a cool, dry place away from chemicals and radiation.
25. Films must be processed under light-tight conditions in a darkroom or daylight hood.
26. Manufacturers' directions must be followed in the preparation and use of processing chemicals, including concentration of solution, time and temperature.

27. Safelights should be installed as per manufactures directions and compatible with all films used. Red bulbs are not acceptable. Screen film such as pantomographic films are more sensitive to light than intraoral dental films. Care must be taken to ensure that no light of incorrect wave length reaches these films.
28. Films should be handled carefully to avoid creasing, scratching and static electricity.

Radiation Protection for Office Personnel:

29. Members are responsible for ensuring that proper radiation hygiene procedures are understood and followed by staff within facilities they are 'connected' with.
30. An operatory (room) must not be used for more than one radiographic procedure simultaneously.
31. No person whose presence is not essential must be in the room during exposure.
32. Persons other than the patient must keep as far away as practicable from the primary beam. Personnel must not be exposed to the useful beam. Deliberate exposure d for training purposes only must not occur.
33. Personnel must take full advantage of the protective devices available.
34. If necessary for the operator to be in the room during special procedures, protective clothing must be worn.
35. Where possible, film holding devices should be used during exposure. If necessary the patient should hold the film. The operator should not hold the film; if this is necessary (this should not become a habit), protective clothing including gauntlets should be used.
36. If weak patients or children need support, holding devices should be used. If parents, escorts, or other personnel are required to assist, they must be provided with adequate protective clothing and be positioned outside of the primary beam. No one person should regularly perform these duties.
37. The x-ray housing must not be held by hand during operation. Housing that drifts or vibrate excessively should have their supports adjusted.
38. All operators of x-ray equipment, personnel who regularly participate in radiological procedures or others who might receive more than 1/10th for the yearly maximum permissible doses should wear personnel dosimeters. When worn with a lead apron it must be worn under the apron.
39. Energized x-ray machines must not be left unattended in a freely accessible location.
40. Where radiation doses in excess of 25% of the maximum permissible doses are being received regularly by any one person, appropriate remedial steps must be taken to improve techniques and protective measures.

The Patient:

41. One of the largest contributors of man-made radiation exposure of the population is diagnostic radiology. It has been stated by some that some of this is unnecessary and should be eliminated.
42. It is the responsibility of the dentist and under direction from him, his staff, to ensure that patients receive no more radiation than necessary. The recommendations and procedures in this section should prove guidelines to the dental practitioner to allow him to meet these goals.(see Chart 1)
43. Radiographs should be made only after clinical evaluation and should be for the purpose of obtaining information not readily otherwise

available.

44. Radiographs should not be taken on a “routine” basis, but only on the basis of the above (see chart 1).
45. The dentist should check if recent films are adequate or can be used to alter the type and number of films required. They should be examined at the time of clinical evaluation.
45. When a patient transfers, or is referred from one practitioner to another, relevant films or copies should be forwarded to the new practitioner and be reviewed by him/her. They can be copied and returned to the first practitioner when they have served their purpose.
46. The number of radiographs required should be kept to the minimum practicable, consistent with obtaining the required information.
47. The fastest films or screen-film combinations consistent with obtaining the required information should be used. The beam should be well collimated.
48. Repeat exposures should not be prescribed merely because the film is not of the “best” diagnostic quality if the radiograph contains the required information.
49. The quality of radiographs should be monitored routinely to ensure that they satisfy diagnostic requirements with minimal patient exposure.

ALARA

50. Radiation safety standards are based on internationally accepted principles of best practice and use of radiation. While there is not one research study that defines an absolute safe minimum for radiation exposure, most regulations are based on the Linear Non-Threshold Model (LNT) that assumes all radiation exposure carries some risk to the individual. However, the regulations are tempered with the ALARA principle, which means to keep radiation exposure As Low As Reasonably Achievable which is dependent on the type of radiation, the benefit derived from its use, and the amount of burden caused by implementing radiation safety practices.

Personal Protective equipment

51. Lead garments should be used to protect patients from radiation whenever it is possible and does not interfere with the diagnostic image.
52. It is reasonable to ask that a dentist to supply protective equipment for patients, and if required for the operators, since the cost and time of placement is minimal. It is recommended that a lead apron with a thyroid collar be used for intraoral films. Panoramic or cephalometric radiographic exams are usually preformed with a lead apron and no thyroid collar.
53. For lasers, the primary concern is eye exposure. Reflections from mirrors or stainless steel surgical equipment can cause accidental exposure. All personnel in the laser treatment area including the patient should use safety eyewear of the appropriate protective wavelength. Laser generated air contaminants are typically contained with conventional dental high volume evacuation systems.

Quality Assurance

54. You have some options to ensure that you are in compliance with this regulation.

(i) Develop an in-house system that will outline the tests that you will do and where you will document the results of these tests. {If you do this, you will have to send your system to Saskatchewan Labour to get it approved – see *clause 16(2)(a)*.}

(ii) Purchase an off-the-shelf QA System. {you should check to make sure that Saskatchewan Labour has approved it.}

(iii) Order a QA kit from the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan. {With the assistance of the Saskatchewan Labour's Radiation Safety Unit, the College has developed a Quality Assurance Procedures Manual that contains all the procedures and testing equipment that you will need to be in compliance with *section 16* of the Regulations.}

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESCRIBING DENTAL RADIOGRAPHS (ADA)

These recommendations are subject to clinical judgment and may not apply to every patient. They are to be used by dentists only after reviewing the patient's health history and completing a clinical examination. Even though radiation exposure from dental radiographs is low, once a decision to obtain radiographs is made it is the dentist's responsibility to follow the ALARA Principle (As Low as Reasonably Achievable) to minimize the patient's exposure.

Chart 1

TYPE OF ENCOUNTER	PATIENT AGE AND DENTAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE				
	Child with Primary Dentition (prior to eruption of first permanent tooth)	Child with Transitional Dentition (after eruption of first permanent tooth)	Adolescent with Permanent Dentition (prior to eruption of third molars)	Adult, Dentate or Partially Edentulous	Adult, Edentulous
New Patient* being evaluated for oral diseases	Individualized radiographic exam consisting of selected periapical/occlusal views and/or posterior bitewings if proximal surfaces cannot be visualized or probed. Patients without evidence of disease and with open proximal contacts may not require a radiographic exam at this time.	Individualized radiographic exam consisting of posterior bitewings with panoramic exam or posterior bitewings and selected periapical images.	Individualized radiographic exam consisting of posterior bitewings with panoramic exam or posterior bitewings and selected periapical images. A full mouth intraoral radiographic exam is preferred when the patient has clinical evidence of generalized oral disease or a history of extensive dental treatment.		Individualized radiographic exam, based on clinical signs and symptoms.
Recall Patient* with clinical caries or at increased risk for caries**	Posterior bitewing exam at 6-12 month intervals if proximal surfaces cannot be examined visually or with a probe			Posterior bitewing exam at 6-18 month intervals	Not applicable
Recall Patient* with no clinical caries and not at increased risk for caries**	Posterior bitewing exam at 12-24 month intervals if proximal surfaces cannot be examined visually or with a probe		Posterior bitewing exam at 18-36 month intervals	Posterior bitewing exam at 24-36 month intervals	Not applicable

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