

Exposure of Airline Pilots and Cabin Crew to Cosmic Radiation During Flight—What’s the Fuss?

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Abstract

The International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) had in 1990 recommended that civilian aircrew be classified as being occupationally exposed to low-dose ionizing radiation, in view of their increased exposure to cosmic rays at altitude. In 2000, the European Union had gone ahead with legislation which requires all European airlines to monitor cosmic radiation levels during flight and to inform aircrew of the possible health risks. However, the evidence for a causal link between cosmic radiation exposure and health risks remains elusive despite recent findings of increased cancer incidence among airline pilots and cabin crew. The inconclusiveness of the evidence notwithstanding, there are compelling reasons for adopting a prudent and precautionary stance.

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