



Corner

American Academy of Health Physics
American Board of Health Physics
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Preparing for Part I of the ABHP Examination

George J. Vargo, Ph.D., CHP

While the American Board of Health Physics (ABHP) does not endorse or recommend any examination preparation course or software, candidates are strongly encouraged to thoroughly review fundamental radiological physics and principles of radiation protection when preparing for Part I. In the Board's experience most unsuccessful candidates did not prepare adequately. In contrast, the successful candidates have usually planned and followed a comprehensive study program. In 1996 the Board asked recent candidates about some of the factors contributing to their degree of success on the exam. The Board noted that the single most important attribute of successful candidates was the amount of time spent studying for the examination. On average, those who passed in 1995 claimed to have spent an average of 300 hours in study. To assist candidates in this process, the Board has developed an *Examination Preparation Guide* that is available at <http://www.hpsl.org/aahp/abhp/prepman/prepman.htm>. This guide is free and available to all interested people.

The *Examination Preparation Guide* contains useful information on the scope and content of the examination, exam strategy, grading criteria, suggested study references, typical Part I questions, and copies of previous Part II examinations. The suggested references are commonly used by the Part I Panel of Examiners to develop new questions for the examination bank. All candidates planning to take the Part I examination should carefully review this material. The references listed in the *Examination Preparation Guide* are regularly reviewed by the ABHP to assure that the material cited is still in print and readily available to all candidates. Since many of the references cited in the *Examination Preparation Guide* contain repetitive or overlapping material, candidates should not feel the need

to obtain all of the materials cited. Sample Part I questions contained in the *Examination Preparation Guide* have appeared on previous examinations and may appear on future examinations in the same or altered form. The sample questions may be typical of as much as 10 percent of the actual examination.

The Board is concerned about a recent trend that shows declining performance on questions dealing with fundamental radiological physics and those involving calculations. Historically, good performance on these questions has strongly correlated with successful performance on Part I. In recent examinations, however, this correlation has decreased. At the same time, the fraction of candidates passing Part I has decreased. The Board is continuing to evaluate this situation. A preliminary analysis of this situation suggests a change in the candidate pool. At this time, however, it is unclear if this is the result of a change in educational background of candidates (e.g., traditional versus nontraditional degree programs) or other factors.

The Board urges all candidates planning to take Part I to use the resources already provided and allow adequate time to prepare for the examination. Many successful candidates begin an organized study program as much as six months in advance of the examination date.

Call for Nominations: William B. McAdams Award

The William B. McAdams Outstanding Service Award is made annually to honor a Certified Health Physicist (CHP) who has made a significant contribution toward the advancement of professionalism in health physics and to the certification process. Nominees shall be CHPs who have served the health physics community through outstanding and extended work on the American Academy of Health Physics (AAHP), ABHP, teaching, or other areas. All CHPs are eligible and posthumous awards are permitted.

All AAHP members are encouraged to submit nominations ASAP. Present your nominations in a letter to the Awards Committee chairperson for 2000, Robert (Bob) Miltenberger, ABHP Vice Chair, detailing the rationale for your nomination and giving background information on your nominee. Address your nomination letter by 15 April 2000 if possible, to:

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