Co-Presidents’ Message

Dear SRA-New England Members:

We are so pleased to announce that the January meeting of the New England Chapter of SRA will include talks from esteemed member of the international Society for Risk Analysis. Gail Charnley of Health Risk Strategies in Washington DC, past President of SRA is coming as part of the SRA Speakers Bureau program; she joins Kim Thompson, professor at Harvard and MIT, and President elect of SRA, for a thoughtful afternoon of discussions about mercury, children’s risk, and directions for risk analysis.

Our last meeting was November 9, and was a wonderful roundtable discussion of issues and research regarding health effects of traffic. Thanks to Brenda Barry of Cadmus for her presentation on the traffic workshop she co-organized.

At the SRA Annual Meeting in Orlando, the chapters and sections committee met to discuss how the international society can support the chapters, including perhaps providing training and certification to chapter members. If you have any thoughts along these lines, please contact Jo Anne Shatkin.

Now is a great time to renew your membership. Also, please note that we are meeting at MIT rather than CDM on January 11, 2006.

Safe and Happy Holidays All,

Your co-chairs: Jo Anne Shatkin and Tom Angus
Risk Analysis: 25 years of the SRA and a perspective on the field
Dr. Kimberly Thompson, President Elect of Society for Risk Analysis, visiting Associate Professor at MIT Sloan School of Management

Mercury, Myths, and Children’s Environmental Health
Dr. Gail Charnley
Health Risk Strategies
Past President of Society for Risk Analysis

Risk Analysis: 25 years of the SRA and a perspective on the field

Summary: This talk will provide a historical review of the first 25 years of the Society for Risk Analysis, highlighting the accomplishments and challenges. The talk will then provide some perspective on the present and future of risk analysis as a field and lead into a group discussion.

Biography: Kimberly Thompson is currently Associate Professor of Risk Analysis and Decision Science at the Harvard School of Public Health where she created and directs the Kids Risk Project. She is currently a visiting Associate Professor at MIT Sloan School of Management and the President-Elect of the Society for Risk Analysis. Her research interests and teaching focus on the issues related to developing and applying quantitative methods for risk assessment and risk management, and consideration of the implications associated with including uncertainty, variability, and time in risk characterization. Drawing on a diverse background, she seeks to effectively integrate technological, social, political, legal, and economic issues into analyses that improve decisions.

Mercury, Myths, and Children’s Environmental Health

Summary: In 2005 the US Environmental Protection Agency promulgated the first regulations ever to control mercury emissions from coal-fired electric power plants. The Clean Air Mercury Rule is being challenged by several states and environmental advocacy organizations on the basis that it violates the Clean Air Act. The social rationale for the challenge is that it does not reduce mercury emissions far enough or fast enough and, as a result, emissions pose an unacceptable methylmercury risk to children. In addition, there is an argument that EPA’s “cap-and-trade” approach to restricting emissions would create methylmercury “hot spots”—concentrated areas of contamination and risk near older, dirtier power plants—in contrast to the technology-based regulatory approach that environmental advocates prefer. While there is no doubt that higher levels of methylmercury can damage the developing nervous system, there is a debate about the extent to which methylmercury poses a risk to children at US environmental levels. Methylmercury exposure occurs as a result of
eating fish and many fish advisories have been put in place warning pregnant women and children away from fish caught in certain areas. An unintended consequence of the debate is that many people are choosing to reduce or eliminate fish consumption altogether as a means of reducing their methylmercury risks, thereby losing the well established developmental and cardiovascular benefits of eating fish. Meanwhile, there is strong evidence that reducing power plant mercury emissions in most of the US will have little impact on methylmercury exposure and risk. This presentation will examine the association between power plant mercury emissions, methylmercury contamination of fish, and children’s health.

**Biography:** Dr. Gail Charnley is an internationally recognized scientist specializing in environmental health risk assessment and risk management science and policy. She has over 20 years of experience in the biological, chemical, and social policy aspects of environmental and public health protection, writing and speaking extensively on issues related to the roles of science and democracy in environmental and public health decision-making. Dr. Charnley focuses on the strategic risk management of complex scientific issues related to, for example, the design and implementation of regulatory programs in the United States and Europe, and on promoting a role for science and analysis in regulatory agendas worldwide. She currently serves on a National Academy of Sciences committee convened to improve the regulation of low-level nuclear waste disposal and another committee charged with developing a long-range vision for toxicity testing and health risk assessment at EPA. She has also served on and chaired several US Army Science Advisory Board committees that evaluated science- and technology-based policies and practices in the Army. She is an adjunct faculty member in the Harvard School of Public Health’s Center for Risk Analysis and has chaired or served on numerous peer review panels convened by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Food and Drug Administration, and Health and Welfare Canada. From 1994-1997 she was executive director of the Presidential/Congressional Commission on Risk Assessment and Risk Management, mandated by Congress to evaluate the roles that risk assessment and risk management play in federal regulatory programs. Before her appointment to the Commission, she served as director of the Toxicology and Risk Assessment Program at the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council, where she also served as the project director for several Academy committees convened to evaluate and make recommendations concerning science-based public policy matters. She lectures frequently on science policy issues and is the author of numerous reports evaluating the toxicity of chemical exposures, environmentally related impacts on public health, the management of risks to health and the environment, children’s environmental health, and democratic science-based public policy and decision-making. She is a fellow and a past president of the international Society for Risk Analysis, for which she has also served as councilor, Sigma Xi distinguished lecturer, advisory board vice-chair, and public policy committee chair. She holds an AB in biochemistry from Wellesley College and a PhD in toxicology from MIT.

**CALENDAR OF UPCOMING SEMINARS**

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POSITIONS (none this month)

Please note that the job-posting fee for this newsletter is $100 for recruiters/commercial and $50 for government and nonprofit organizations. Please make your payment to Arlene Levin, NE-SRA Treasurer at Eastern Research Group, Inc. 110 Hartwell Street, Lexington, MA 02421

DIRECTIONS TO MIT-Building E40 – Muckley Building- 1 Amherst Street, Cambridge, MA

Detailed map and directions can be found at http://whereis.mit.edu/map-jpg?section=directions

Building E40 (Muckley Building)

via Public Transportation - MBTA ("The T")

- Take the Red Line subway to the Kendall/MIT Station or to the Central Square Station, both of which are a short walk from campus. The walk from Central Square takes about 10 minutes and takes you right down Massachusetts Avenue. The Kendall/MIT Station is on the eastern side of campus, and as soon as you enter an MIT building you can get to the other buildings without going outside.

- The #1 or Dudley/Harvard Station bus stops at MIT on Massachusetts Avenue and provides transportation to Central Square and Harvard Square (Northbound), and Boston (Southbound). The MIT stop is at a large crosswalk with a stoplight. On one side of the street are steps leading up to large Ionic columns and the Small Dome of MIT; on the other side of the street is the Stratton Student Center and Kresge Oval (an open, grass-covered area). Additionally, the CT1 (Crosstown bus) stops at the MIT stop on Massachusetts Avenue and the CT2 bus stops on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Vassar St. as well as Kendall Square T Station.

From Logan Airport

by taxi - Taxi fare from the airport is about $20-$25. During non-rush hour, the taxi ride will take about 15 minutes. During rush hour, the ride could take 30 minutes.

by subway - From any terminal at Logan airport, take the Silver Line bus to South Station. At South Station, change to the Red Line subway to Kendall/MIT (inbound toward Alewife). Under normal conditions the ride will take about one-half hour and the fare is $1.25.

by car - Leaving the airport, follow the signs to the Sumner Tunnel. Enter the tunnel and stay in the right lane. At the end of the tunnel, continue to stay in the right lane, start down an incline and bear to the right immediately at the sign for Storrow Drive. Take Exit 26 for Cambridge/Somerville. Follow the signs for Back Bay/Cambridge (do not take the exit for Cambridge/Somerville). Stay in the right lane and follow the signs for Storrow Drive Westbound. After you pass under the pedestrian walkbridges, change to the left lane and take the exit for 2A North. Turn right and cross the Harvard Bridge (Massachusetts Avenue). MIT's main entrance is 77 Massachusetts Avenue, and it will be on the right at the second set of traffic lights.

From the North (I-95 or I-93)

If you are heading south on I-93, follow I-93 into Boston then follow the I-93 instructions below. If you are heading south on I-95, take the I-93 South exit (exit 37) then follow the instructions from I-93. Alternatively, take the I-90 East exit (Massachusetts Turnpike) from I-95 then follow the instructions from I-90.

From the South (I-95 or I-93)
If you are heading north on I-93, follow I-93 into Boston then follow the [I-93 instructions](#) below. If you are heading north on I-95, take the I-93 North exit then follow the instructions from I-93. Alternatively, take the I-90 East exit from I-95 then follow the instructions from I-90.

### From the West (I-90) (Mass Turnpike)

Follow I-90 east to the Cambridge/Brighton exit (exit 18). Following the signs to Cambridge, cross the River Street Bridge, and continue straight about 1 mile to Central Square. Turn right onto Massachusetts Avenue and follow Massachusetts Avenue for about a half mile. The main entrance to MIT will be on your left. If you cross the river again, you have gone too far.

From I-93, take exit 26, and follow the signs to Back Bay along Storrow Drive West, approximately 1.5 miles, to the exit for Route 2A. The exit will be on the left, just before the Harvard Bridge (more appropriately called the Massachusetts Avenue Bridge). The Charles River will be on your right. As you cross the bridge, you will be looking at MIT - the Great Dome and academic facilities are on the right, the dormitories and athletic facilities are on the left.

### Parking Suggestions

Parking in Cambridge and Boston is generally not an enjoyable experience. Whenever possible, park your car at the hotel at which you are staying, and use [public transportation](#) to get to the MIT campus. If you must drive to the campus, there is both on- and off-street parking available, but most [public parking](#) is not very close to the center of the MIT campus (unless you arrive early in the morning or late in the evening).

There is metered parking on [Massachusetts Avenue](#) for short stays and evenings/weekends, as well as a number of lots at which you may park for a fee. These include [Vassar St. Public Parking](#) at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Vassar Street, [University Park / Star Market Public Parking](#), and [Marriott Parking Garage](#) on Ames St. and Broadway.

If you were invited to campus and a visitor parking hang tag was given to you, you may park in the lots specified on the hang tag. Please check the [visitor parking](#) listing and plan your trip accordingly.