CONTENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CRITERIA FOR LASERS AND OPTICAL RADIATION 10

1. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES . . . 13
   1.1 Summary 13
      1.1.1 Scope 13
      1.1.2 Optical radiation exposure 13
      1.1.3 Present health and safety standards . . . 18
   1.2 Recommendations for further studies 19

2. DEFINITIONS OF OPTICAL RADIATION 23
   2.1 The electromagnetic spectrum 23
   2.2 Interaction of electromagnetic radiation with matter 25
      2.2.1 Interaction at an interface 26
         2.2.1.1 Reflection 26
         2.2.1.2 Refraction 27
      2.2.2 Interaction with a medium 28
         2.2.2.1 Transmission 28
         2.2.2.2 Attenuation 28
      2.2.3 Interference, diffraction and scattering effects 29
         2.2.3.1 Interference and diffraction . . . 29
         2.2.3.2 Scattering 30

3. SOURCES OF RADIATION 31
   3.1 Molecular and atomic transitions 32

4. LASERS 33
   4.1 The laser medium 33
   4.2 The pumping system 34
   4.3 The resonant optical cavity 34
   4.4 Types of lasers 34
      4.4.1 Active media 35
      4.4.2 Temporal modes of operation 36
   4.5 Spatial (TEM) modes 38
   4.6 Beam characteristics 39
      4.6.1 Beam diameter 39
      4.6.2 Beam divergence 39
      4.6.3 Beam irradiance versus range for a circular beam 40
      4.6.4 Hot spots 41
      4.6.5 Coherence 42

5. RADIOMETRIC CONCEPTS 42
5.1 Radiometric and photometric terminology 42
5.2 Extended sources versus point sources 42
5.3 Inverse square law 42

6. RADIOMETRIC AND PHOTOMETRIC MEASUREMENT 46
6.1 Introduction 46
6.2 Measurement instrumentation 47
6.2.1 Thermal detectors 48
6.2.2 Quantum detectors 49
6.2.3 Detectors to resolve short pulses 49
6.2.4 Safety meters 50
6.2.5 Spectroradiometers 50
6.3 Biological weighting of spectroradiometric data 51

7. BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS 52
7.1 Thermal injury 52
7.2 Photochemical injury 52
7.3 Threshold of injury 53
7.3.1 Means of determining thresholds of injury 54

8. EFFECTS OF OPTICAL RADIATION ON THE EYE 55
8.1 Anatomy and physiology of the human eye 55
8.1.1 The cornea 56
8.1.2 The lens 57
8.1.3 The retina and choroid 57
8.2 Spectral properties of the eye 59
8.3 Injury to the anterior portion of the eye . . . 60
8.3.1 Effects on the cornea 61
8.3.2 UVR lenticular effects 63
8.3.3 Infrared cataract 64
8.4 Retinal injury 65
8.4.1 Determining the retinal exposure 67
8.4.1.1 Pupil size 67
8.4.1.2 Spectral transmission of the ocular media and spectral absorption by the retina and choroid 68
8.4.1.3 Optical image quality 69
8.4.1.4 Small images 70
8.4.1.5 Retinal pigment epithelium (RPE) absorption 70
8.4.2 Chorioretinal thermal injury 71
8.4.3 Location of retinal burns 72

8.5 Photochemical retinal injury 72
8.5.1 Very long-term exposure 72
8.6 Flash blindness 75
8.7 Discomfort glare 76
8.8 Flashing lights 76

9. THE SKIN 78
9.1 Anatomy 78
9.2 Body heat regulation 78
9.3 Optical properties 79
9.4 Penetration depth and reflection 80
9.4.1 Injury to the skin 81
9.4.2 The sensation of warmth and heat flow . . 83
9.4.3 Thermal injury threshold for the skin . . 84
9.4.4 Delayed effects 84
9.4.5 Ambient environment and heat stress . . . 84
9.4.6 UVR effects on the skin 85
9.4.7 Photosensitization 85
9.4.8 Photoallergy 85

10. LASER SAFETY STANDARDS:
RATIONALE AND CURRENT STANDARDS 87
10.1 Introduction 87
10.2 Laser hazard classification 87

11. EXPOSURE LIMITS 90
11.1 Rationale 90
11.2 Assessment of the "safety factor" 91
11.3 Environmental considerations 92
11.4 Limiting apertures 93
11.4.1 The 1-mm aperture 93
11.4.2 The 11-mm aperture 93
11.4.3 The 7-mm aperture 94
11.4.4 The 80-mm aperture 94
11.5 Spectral dependence of exposure limits 94
11.6 Repetitively pulsed laser exposure 95
11.7 Restriction for special applications
(Class 3a). 96
11.8 Present standards of exposure 96
11.8.1 Laser standards 96
11.8.1.1 Exposure limits 101
11.8.1.2 Repetitively pulsed lasers . . 102
11.8.1.3 Extended source laser
exposure 103
11.8.1.4 Restrictions on ELs 104
11.8.2 Standards for non-laser sources 104
11.8.2.1 Introduction 104
11.8.2.2 UVR criteria 106
11.8.2.3 Retinal health criteria 109

11.8.2.4 Retinal thermal risk evaluation 111
11.8.2.5 Retinal blue-light risk evaluation 111
11.8.2.6 IR-A risk analysis 112
11.8.3 Infrared standards 112

12. RISK EVALUATION 114
12.1 Laser hazard classification 115
12.2 Environmental considerations including reflection and the probability of exposure . . 115
12.2.1 Reflections 116
12.2.2 Retroreflection 117
12.2.3 Optically aided viewing 117

13. ACCIDENTAL INJURIES 119

14. CONTROL MEASURES 120

15. HAZARDS OF LAMP SOURCES AND PROJECTION SYSTEMS 122

16. PROJECTION OPTICS 125

17. SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR HIGH-INTENSITY SOURCES 126

18. WELDING ARCS 128

19. EYE AND SKIN PROTECTION 129
19.1 Laser safety eyewear 129
19.2 Welders' filters 129
19.3 Eye protection for furnace radiation 130
19.4 Eye protection filters for solar radiation . . . 130
19.5 Skin-protecting agents for UVR (Sunscreens) . . 131
19.6 Protective garments 131

20. MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE (RATIONALE) 132

21. FORMAL TEACHING FOR LASER WORKERS 132

REFERENCES 133

GLOSSARY 147