

Occupational Health and Safety Guidelines - Radiation and Magnetic Imaging

Sign Language Communications NSW has had advice from the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency and from the Children's Hospital at Westmead as to safe levels of exposure to radiation and magnetism for interpreters.

If you are asked to work in a medical or dental setting, we will do all we can to find out beforehand if x-rays or other forms of radiation (e.g. CT scans, fluoroscopies) or magnetism (e.g. MRIs) will be involved.

If you accept an assignment where you could be exposed to radiation or magnetism, please observe the following OH&S advice.

For x-rays and other forms of radiation:

If you are pregnant or think you may be pregnant, we advise you to turn down any work involving radiation. You are under no obligation to inform us as to why you are unavailable.

1. In most cases, you will be able to position yourself with the operator/radiographer in a separate room. In this case, you are protected from the radiation, and will be exposed to only very minor amounts of background radiation. You can freely accept work which provides this sort of protection.
2. *For x-rays only:* In a small minority of cases, you will need to remain with the patient. In this case, ensure that you are provided with all the protection that the operator themselves would use if they were to remain in the room – for example, a lead apron or protective screen. While these devices offer protection, we are advised that you should only work under these conditions up to **twice per year**. If you have already worked twice under these conditions in the previous 12 months, please do not accept any further work which could involve radiation.
3. *For CT scans, fluoroscopies, nuclear medicine:* **Do not remain with the patient.** Stand behind a screen or in a separate booth. The operator may remain with the patient, so you will need to interpret any communication between them *before* the procedure commences.

Please be aware that, in nearly all situations, there will be no need to remain with the patient. To ensure that the operator and patient can communicate, discuss options with both parties – for example, lights can be flashed or you can position mirrors so the patient can see you sign.

For MRIs and other forms of magnetism:

If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or are fitted with a metal device as listed over, we advise you to turn down any work involving magnetism. You are under no obligation to inform us as to why you are unavailable.

We have been advised that, unless you are pregnant or have a device listed below in your body, there is **no risk** to you in being in the room during an MRI scan.

Government guidelines state that the operator must be able to communicate with the MRI patient at all times. This means that you will need to be positioned in the room with the patient, who will be able to see you through a mirror.

Contraindicated devices

Please do not accept work which may involve an MRI or other magnetism if you have any of the following:

- Cardiac pacemaker
- Neurostimulator
- Cochlear implant
- Brain aneurysm clip
- Artificial heart valve
- Metal in eyes
- Any other implants (after an operation)
- Artificial joints
- Metal rods/plates/screws/nails
- Wire sutures/surgical clips
- Shrapnel injuries