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The Value of Medical Geology to the Geosciences

Medical Geology is a relatively new discipline gradually establishing itself in the geoscience curriculum. Medical Geology has been defined as the study of the impacts of geologic materials and geologic processes on animal and human health. Geoscientists and others have addressed these issues for centuries but modern analytical tools and computing capabilities have created significant opportunities for geoscientists to contribute to these important societal issues. Medical Geology issues include, but are not limited to: health consequences of natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes; water quality issues such as exposure to arsenic and organic compounds; the health issues caused by ambient dust; the health impacts of energy resource use; occupational health issues; veterinary geology; and the health benefits of rocks and minerals. These and other Medical Geology issues impacts the health and well-being of billions of people in virtually every corner of the Earth. The unique skills and insights into the operation of the natural environment provide geoscientists with the potential to help the medical/public health communities to minimize or eliminate these widespread and serious health problems. Hopefully, the value of Medical Geology will be recognized.

Biography:

Robert B. Finkelman retired in 2005 from the U.S. Geological Survey. He is currently a Research Professor in the Dept. of Geosciences, University of Texas at Dallas and a Distinguished Professor at the China University of Mining and Technology, Beijing. He is internationally recognized for his work on coal chemistry and as a leader of the emerging field of Medical Geology. He is a Fellow of the Geological Society of America; former Chairman of the GSA's Coal Geology Division; founding member and past Chair of the International Medical Geology Association; and Past-Chair of the GSA's Geology and Health Division; currently a Steering Committeemember of AGU's GeoHealth Section.