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### Review of: *Dangerous Places: Health, Safety, and Archaeology* (David A. Poirer & Kenneth L. Feder eds.)

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Review of: *Dangerous Places: Health, Safety, and Archaeology* (David A. Poirer & Kenneth L. Feder eds.)

**Erratum**

The citation for this review is *12 RISK* 143 (2001) in most commercial databases.

**Dangerous Places: Health, Safety, and Archaeology** (David A. Poirier & Kenneth L. Feder eds., Bergin & Garvey, Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc. 2001). Introduction, bibliographic references, index. ISBN 0-89789-632-7 [264 pp. \$65.00. Cloth, 88 Post Road West, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881-5007. Telephone orders: 1 (800) 225-5800].

**Dangerous Places: Health, Safety, and Archaeology** is a compendium of articles on both the common and more esoteric environmental health risks encountered by field archaeologists. Included are articles on natural environmental risks, such as soil-borne bacteria and parasites, as well as hazards from historic land use, such as unexploded ordnance and chemical contamination. While addressed to archaeologists, the book provides a useful overview of health risks confronted by many whose jobs involve digging, including construction workers, agricultural laborers, and miners, and is suitably written for a general audience.

The structure of the book is logically organized into two parts, plus the editors' introduction. The first part, entitled "Biological Hazards," progresses from articles on vector-borne illnesses of concern to fieldworkers in many disciplines, including Lyme disease, rabies and hantavirus, to papers focused on more discipline-specific risks such as infection from gravesites and abandoned privies. Altogether, the papers in the first part comprise a primer on the epidemiology of a number of viral, bacterial, parasitic, and other infectious diseases and offer specific guidelines for reducing the likelihood of infection among field crew members.

The second part, entitled "America's Colonial and Industrial Legacy," provides a sampling of health risks associated with archaeological research on land subject to intensive human use, including abandoned mines, graveyards, factories, and battlegrounds. Case studies illustrate the use of health and safety plans for such excavations. Mercury contamination at a silver mine, the ubiquity and serious health risk of lead in soils, arsenic contamination of nineteenth century graveyards, and unexploded ordnance are among the risks discussed.

Notably absent from the book is an extensive discussion of rural chemical waste threats, such as remote abandoned hazardous waste sites and farmland pesticides and herbicides. This is not to say that the book conveys illusions of idyllic excavations in the countryside; beyond the first part's discussion of diseases are specific allusions to abandoned waste and agricultural chemicals in the book's last set of articles. Furthermore, the inevitable omission of an extensive discussion of certain site-specific risks, like agricultural chemicals in farm soils, is remedied by the book's overall orientation towards risk assessments and health and safety plans.

The final article in the collection, "A Final Forewarning: Practical Steps to Providing Archaeologists with Safe Working Environments," is a proper summation for the work. The author, an archaeologist and health and safety consultant, describes his own harrowing experience with a trench wall failure and his quest to raise the level of health and safety awareness among archaeologists. The article outlines pertinent U.S. Occupational Health and Safety Administration regulations, standards applicable to general industry, construction, and trench work, as well as requirements for disseminating information on workplace hazards to employees. The author recommends assessing site-specific risks, providing appropriate employee training and education, including annual hazardous workers operations courses for health and safety and first aid training, and developing and implementing a corporate health and safety policy for field operations.

Several authors of articles in the book cite the nineteenth century patrician origins of archaeology as a cause of the field's belated orientation towards health and safety planning and awareness of the risks of excavations. Perhaps the popular, cavalier image of Indiana Jones compounds the problem for the current generation. **Dangerous Places: Health, Safety, and Archaeology** should be required reading for field crews and their supervisors to emphasize the risks of digging in areas of human use and occupancy and to provide guidance for ensuring health and safety in specific environments.

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