

Changes in Radiation Safety Legislation

An update for dental practitioners

The Radiation Protection Act 1965 has been repealed and replaced by the Radiation Safety Act 2016 which came into force on 7 March 2017. The new Act is similar to the old legislation in that it aims to facilitate the safe use of ionising radiation. The intent is to protect people and the environment from the harmful effects of ionising radiation and to meet international obligations on radiation protection, safety, security and nuclear non-proliferation.

This legislation covers the use of radiography equipment in dental practice.

What does this mean for dental practitioners?

Licensing

User licences Those who use X-ray equipment are still required to hold a user licence, however the Office of Radiation Safety (ORS) has been able to obtain exemptions for dentists, dental specialists, dental therapists, dental oral health therapists, dental hygienists and orthodontic auxiliaries where radiography is included in the Dental Council scope of practice for that practitioner. This means dental practitioners, who have the appropriate scope and who hold an annual practicing certificate, are no longer required to pay an annual licence fee for a user licence.

Source licences The Act introduces a new licensing requirement (called a source licence) for the organisations that manage or control radiography equipment regardless of whether they own the equipment. There are no exemptions from source licensing requirements.

Fees apply for each location from which X-ray equipment is managed or controlled. A fee regime has been developed following a full public consultation in 2016. Fees have been determined based on the risks associated with the equipment and the required frequency of regulatory inspections, and are set out in the Radiation Safety Regulations. The fees also depend on the licence term sought by the applicant. GST inclusive fees are set out in this table:

Equipment	Licence Term (years)		
	1	2	3
Dental X-ray equipment excluding cone beam	\$415.15	\$830.30	\$1245.45
Dental X-ray equipment including cone beam	\$825.70	\$1651.40	\$2477.10

ORS has started contacting dental facilities to commence the source licencing process. If your facility has not already been contacted then you can expect to hear from ORS shortly.

Code of practice

A new code of practice, to replace the current Code of Safe Practice for the use of X-rays in dentistry (CSP7), has been developed following a full public consultation and will be issued by the end of May 2018. Dental practitioners have an obligation under the Act to comply with this Code.