

**Weather:** Partly sunny today with a high of 78. Strong southerly winds. Tonight, chance of lingering showers, low of 45. Slightly cooler Tuesday.

**Have you had enough?  
Try a Replacement**

Arts and Entertainment, page 11

**Second baseman Mims  
leads Huskers to sweep**

Sports, page 8

# Daily Nebraskan

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## Radioactive romance Nuclear energy safe, officer says

By Todd von Kampen  
Senior Reporter

Hanging on Larry Grimm's office door in the 501 Building is a red and yellow sign that says, "CAUTION: RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS."

But those who enter the room shouldn't think they're about to keel over and die, Grimm said. If used properly, he says, the radioactive materials in his office — or anywhere on campus — are no more dangerous than the light emitted from an airplane's "EXIT" sign.

Grimm, who came to Lincoln from Denver, took over as UNL's radiation safety officer in 1982. He screens all radioactive materials arriving on campus, trains professors in their use and investigates any accidents that might occur. Even virtually harmless radioactive materials are checked closely, he said.

"I treat it like electricity," he said. "If you treat it with a healthy respect, it won't hurt you. If you don't, it can really shock you."

The Radiation Safety Office was established 20 years ago to make certain federal and state regulations on radiation are followed, said Director of Environmental Health and Safety Earle Brown.

People working as radiation safety officers are required to have five years experience in health physics, which is the study of radiation effects on people and the proper ways to handle radiation and the prevention of problems.

Most radioactive materials are used in conducting research, Grimm said. Between 70 and 80 faculty members, he said, are authorized to handle radioactive materials in fields ranging from cellular biology to agricultural engineering.

Radioactive versions of common elements like hydrogen, carbon, iodine and phosphorus account for most of the radioactive materials at UNL, Grimm said. The mechanical engineering department has some plutonium, he said, but its radioactivity level is much lower than plutonium used for nuclear energy.

Many people have the misconception that exposure to radioactive materials makes one radioactive, Grimm said. But to reach that level of exposure, he said, people would have to be bombarded heavily with protons or neutrons.

The heaviest concentration of radioactive materials at UNL, he said, emits only half as much radiation as an "EXIT" sign.

"It's like saying, 'If I get hit by light, I become a light bulb,'" he said.

Although the danger level is low, Grimm said, he assumes that radiation can be harmful and should be watched carefully. People can breathe in radioactive materials or absorb them through

the skin easily if they are not careful.

Before faculty members are authorized to use radioactive materials, Grimm said, they have to be trained in its proper use. He said he keeps track of the exact amount of materials each faculty member has with the help of a computer in his office. When faculty members are ready to dispose of radioactive waste, he said, they report to him so he can send it to a disposal site.

UNL's Radiation Safety Commission has the final authority to grant permission to use radioactive materials, Grimm said. If faculty members are found to be using the materials away from them, he said.

"For research, that's a killer," he said. "It has been done."

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—Grimm

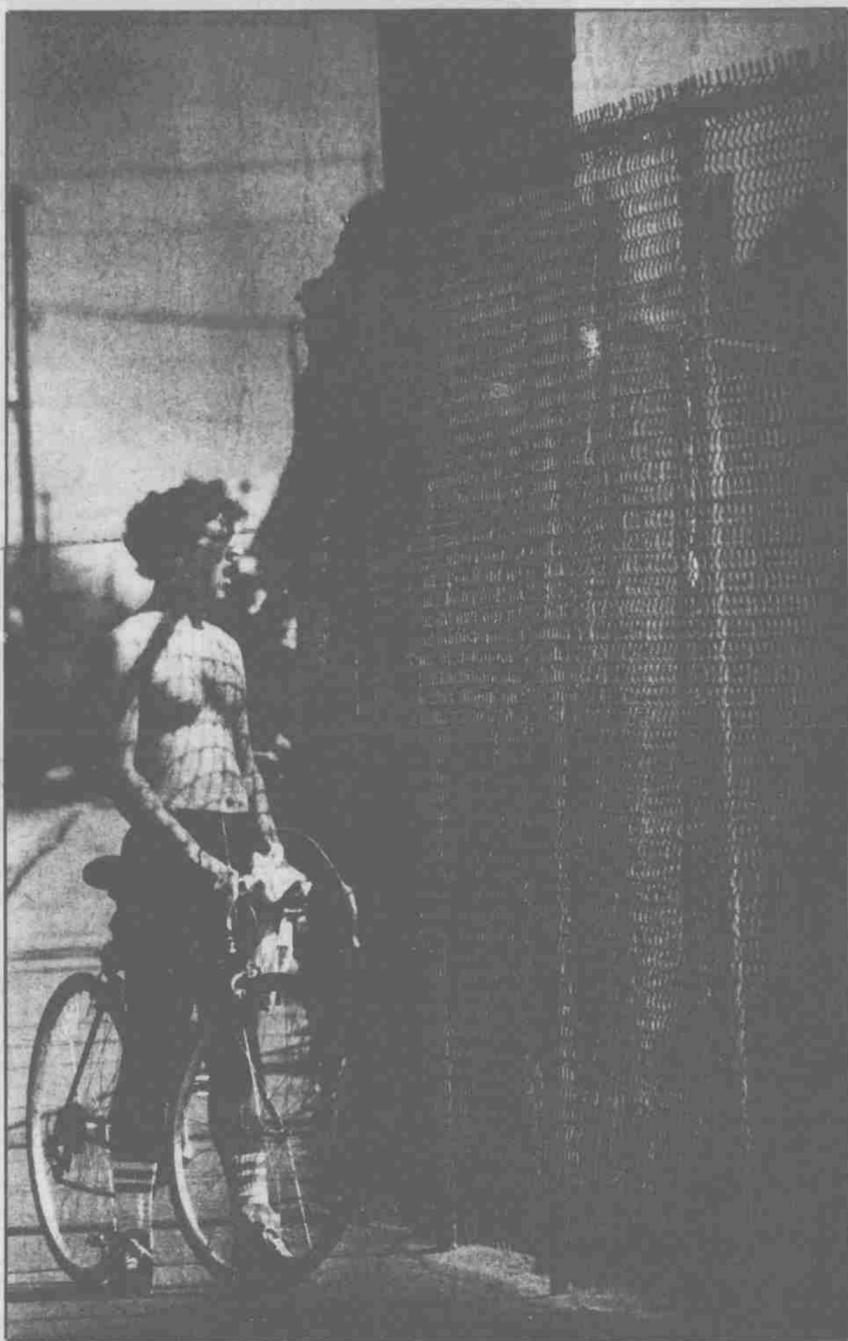
Grimm said UNL has had few problems with spills of radioactive materials. A recent spill of phosphorous-32, he said, couldn't be completely scrubbed out of the floor, but a piece of paper placed over the spill area blocked the radiation. The phosphorous-32 will decay completely in about three months, he said.

When he came to UNL, Grimm said, he made training programs one of his priorities. Their success will not stop problems with handling radioactive materials, he said, but they should help insure that people use them more safely.

"I, as a health physicist, expect people to make mistakes," he said. "Ninety-nine percent of the problems out there are traceable to human error."

Even if people make mistakes, Grimm said, they should not worry excessively about radiation exposure.

"The perception of danger from radiation activity in this society is highly overblown," he said. "I would personally rather live next to a nuclear power plant than drive 300 miles. The risk is much greater driving."



Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

### The great escape

Tom Magnuson of Lincoln interrupts his bike ride to catch a few innings of Sunday's Husker baseball game against Kansas State.

## Regents consider merger of teachers colleges

By Kent Endacott  
Senior Reporter

The NU Board of Regents is considering a plan to merge teacher education programs at UNL and UNO.

At the regents' March 22 meeting, Regent Donald Fricke of Lincoln introduced a proposal to study a possible merger between the UNL Teachers College and the UNO College of Education. The Lincoln college has 2,098 students and the Omaha college has 1,149.

But NU President Ronald Roskens assured UNO Chancellor Del Weber that the study will not halt UNO's search for a teacher of education

dean. Richard Flynn is the acting dean.

Weber said candidates already have been identified for the position.

Regent Chairman John Payne of Kearney said the merger is not a possibility because the departments are too large. He said he also opposes the merger because he fears it would cause a future teacher shortage in the state.

"There's going to be an extreme shortage in education in the future," Payne said. "We should be encouraging students to get involved in teaching."

"Everything goes in cycles, and

we're at the bottom of Teachers College enrollment right now."

The regents delayed formal action on the proposal until their April meeting when the findings of an administrative study conducted by the firm Marwick and Mitchell will be made available to the board. The study is intended to help university officials streamline the NU administration.

Regent Margaret Robinson of Norfolk said a merger may not be possible, but the two departments should work toward better cooperation.

Roskens said the board must be prepared to take action on difficult proposals needed to save money.

He said Fricke is "very genuine" in his views of the future.

"We don't know what Grant-Rudman will do. We don't know what the Nebraska economy will do," Roskens said.

"We're talking about change, and the most painful kind of change. We have to modify our approach," he said.

The board also delayed action on a proposal to eliminate the NU School of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

UNL Chancellor Martin Massengale suggested the board delay any action until a report on the effects of \$3 million in budget cuts is completed.

Ted Hartung, dean of the College of Agriculture, said NU might be able to cut the budget through cooperation with state colleges. But specifics have not been worked out, he said.

Regent Robert Simmons of Scottsbluff said the board must decide the future of the school.

"We're going to have to act pretty fast if we're going to have any school out there," Simmons said.

Despite the uncertainty of the school's future, students should register for fall classes, Massengale said.

Hartung said the school would save an estimated \$210,000 under the cooperation plan.