

seem to lean more on popularly accepted views than on hard proof. Recent work has shown that air pollutants can increase the response of the airways to allergens; the key question is to what extent does this occur at ambient levels of pollution. This is harder to answer but if not mentioned the reader is left with the impression that the effect is of known importance.

The chapters dealing with solutions are helpful. Much useful information has been collected and tabulated. This will be an important source for students, especially as the "grey literature" in this area can be difficult to trace.

Costs and benefits are considered but not in great depth. For comparatively wealthy countries, air pollution is a soluble problem, for poor countries this may not be the case for some years yet. Given that industrial countries are inevitably in competition with one another it is not easy to see that rich countries will wish to help the less fortunate to enjoy a clean industrial revolution. Sadly, the old administrative adage "costs lie where they fall" seems to apply on a global scale.

In conclusion, this is a useful and inexpensive book which deals with an important problem. The more advanced reader will wish to follow up some of the author's points in the original literature—if he does so then he will find the picture is less clear cut than presented in *Smog Alert*.

R L MAYNARD

**Environmental Hazards and Human Health** by RICHARD B PHILP. (Pp 306; price £55.) 1995. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. ISBN 1-56670-133-3.

As the author of this title proclaims, it is increasingly necessary for students of environmental sciences to know something of toxicology, and for students of toxicology to know something of the environment; the intention of *Environmental Hazards and Human Health* is to bridge that gap. The chapter titles range from water pollution through radiation hazards to risk analysis and the Gaia concept.

This book is both lively and readable. Its intended aims are ambitious and its content comprehensive, but it somehow falls short of fully meeting its objectives. This may be due to the rather idiosyncratic style and the patchyness of the text. Although it frequently makes interesting reading, the material presented is often sketchy and selective. It also lacks formal referencing. Thus the material sometimes has an anecdotal feel, although balancing this is the author's personal touch and the inclusion of some unusual and useful snippets of material.

It seems to be a prerequisite nowadays to preface any text or chapter on toxicology or pharmacology with a quote from Paracelsus.

This one is no exception, although the quote used is more accurate than usual. It seems ironic that Paracelsus is so often used in this context as the point he was making referred in fact to the homeopathic usage of known poisons. As a general comment, I was not sure that the introductory quotes in this book contributed significantly.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, in a book of this kind covering a very broad range of topics, some sections are lengthy and detailed whereas others seem short and superficial. Moreover, the material sometimes seems rather too simplistic and does not always adequately support the review questions given at the end of each chapter. Indeed, I was not convinced about the appropriateness of these questions or of the case studies provided. Also, it has to be said that the illustrations are not of the highest quality; they are all in black and white and often rather crude in comparison with the superb graphics increasingly commonplace in books of this ilk. In terms of completeness and topicality of its contents, I was surprised not to see PM<sub>10</sub> mentioned by name. Nor was there a reference as such to environmental oestrogens and the increasing evidence regarding the endocrine disrupting properties of chemicals, which is currently a very topical issue in terms of both scientific and public interest.

My overriding impression of this book was of a brave, if not wholly successful, attempt to cover all the key issues in this vast subject area. Although perhaps trying to achieve too much, the author nevertheless has produced a reader friendly overview for students needing basic information on a wide range of topics in the environment and health field, and I am sure the book will receive a wide readership. At £55 this hardback book is reasonable value for money.

PAUL HARRISON

**Traumatic Stress in Critical Occupations, Recognition, Consequences, and Treatment.** By DOUGLAS PATON, JOHN M VIOLANT. (Pp 245.) 1996. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas. ISBN 0-398-06577-2.

The poet Ralph Waldo Emerson described the simple reality of the experiences of human beings in traumatic situations when he mused "we boil at different degrees". This book attempts to explore not only each person's reaction to traumatic stressful situations, but also the "complex interactions between the person, the traumatic event, and the social and organisational background against which performance takes place". The emphasis here is on understanding the stress and trauma phenomena and developing an "effective trauma management system". This duality of objectives, highlighting the current theory in the field

and the practical solutions is laudable. Also, by encompassing the phrase "critical occupations", the authors have widened the conventional view of traumatic stress being associated with the emergency services only, extending the construct to the "helping professionals" as well.

The book is divided into eight chapters, the first two of which are concerned with a broad overview of the field and by research considerations on methodology and assessment strategies. The next four chapters explore specific critical occupations such as emergency medical service workers, the police, and disaster relief agencies. Most of these cover not only the research undertaken but also education, prevention, and support approaches. The last two chapters, from my point of view, are the most interesting, as they explore the training and support for emergency responders and future issues in the area of practice and research. The issues of training and preparation, support and demands related to the event, and recovery and the social and organisational influences are assessed in depth. The assessment of occupational trauma is examined in the final chapter, with an emphasis on the need to carry out research which is longitudinal in nature and to explore a range of preventive strategies rarely discussed—for example, screening.

This volume really does make a contribution, both in terms of future research and strategies that organisations might adopt in coping with traumatic stress at work. It is up to date and clarifies many of the methodological and occupational issues currently confronting the field of traumatic stress in an organisational context. It is not a cure all or a simple "do it yourself" guide to corporate post-traumatic stress disorder, but a step in the right direction of an increasing problem among critical occupational groups. What is important for the health of employees in any work environment, as this book reinforces time and time again, is to provide a creative and supportive organisational culture. This can be done if we follow the simple dictat of Kornhauser, over 30 years ago, in his book *The mental health of the industrial worker*: "Mental health is not so much a freedom from specific frustrations as it is an overall balanced relationship to the world, which permits a person to maintain a realistic, positive belief in himself and his purposeful activities. Insofar as his entire job and life situation facilitate and support such feelings of adequacy, inner security, and meaningfulness of his existence, it can be presumed that his mental health will tend to be good. What is important in a negative way is not any single characteristic of his situation but everything that deprives the person of purpose and zest, that leaves him with negative feelings about himself, with anxieties, tensions, a sense of lostness, emptiness, and futility."

CARY L COOPER