Fuqua is naming an 18-member bipartisan task force of committee members, which is expected to meet when Congress returns from its current recess, to begin fashioning the agenda for the study.

While the prospective study of science policy is billed as comprehensive, its limits will apparently match the committee's jurisdictional boundaries. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Science Foundation, and National Bureau of Standards are the main agencies in the science committee's domain. However, House rules give the Science and Technology Committee special oversight powers over all nonmilitary research. That includes R&D for agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and Department of Agriculture over which other committees have legislative jurisdiction.

To keep things manageable, the study is expected to concentrate on policy for federally supported basic and applied research, leaving out industrial policy which touches on such matters as innovation and patent and antitrust law. The main focus, therefore, will be on relations between the federal government and universities.

—**JOHN WALSH**

Shuttle Flight Scrubbed

The 12th flight of the space shuttle, originally scheduled for June, has been formally scrubbed and its principal payloads moved to the following flight, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced on 12 July. Under a new plan, the next flight will be launched in late August and its astronauts will be responsible for accomplishing in 6 or 7 days a series of tasks that was formerly spread across 2 weeks.

The last flight was delayed first by a computer failure and then by the malfunction of a valve in one of the shuttle's main engines shortly before the scheduled lift-off (*Science,* 20 July, p. 292). At the time of NASA's decision to cancel the flight outright, 3 weeks of intensive investigation had failed to turn up any solid clues as to why the valve had malfunctioned. Similarly, the computer failure had been traced to a "contaminated" transistor, but no one knew how or why the contamination occurred. In addition, an unrelated problem with a satellite booster also remained unsolved.

NASA officials made light of these problems in their announcement, emphasizing that the shuttle had operated properly in shutting down after the computer and engine malfunctions. But they left open the possibility that continuing uncertainty about any or all of these problems might cause additional changes in the schedule and manifest for the new flight. As it is, technical problems with the shuttle and its associated equipment have been responsible for the elimination of four flights from the original schedule for 1984.—**R. JEFFREY SMITH**

Fuel Switch May Shut Some University Reactors

A. Francis DiMeglio, spokesman for the operators of U.S. research reactors, says that several university programs may close down if the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) carries out the new rule it published on 6 July. The rule requires the owners of 31 non-power reactors in the United States to come up with plans in the next year for ending the use of high-enriched uranium (HEU) fuel.

All but a few reactors that can show they have a "unique purpose" will be asked to convert to low-enriched (LEU) fuel. Those likely to be exempted are reactors at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of Missouri, the National Bureau of Standards, and perhaps Union Carbide's plant in Tuxedo, New York.

The change is being ordered to make weapons control policy appear more consistent. The United States' credibility will improve if it abides by the same limitations on bomb-grade fuel that it is asking other countries to follow (*Science,* 2 March, p. 912). The principle is commendable. But researchers point out that the NRC rule will affect only a small fraction—perhaps 10 percent—of the HEU shipped by this country, and that the federal government's own research reactors will not be affected.

DiMeglio is director of the University of Rhode Island's reactor and chairman of the National Organization of Test, Research, and Training Reactors. The group will meet on 23 August at McMaster University, Ontario, and, according to DiMeglio, will probably draw up a unified response to the NRC at that time.

Although Congress recently appropriated $2 million to help universities make the change from HEU to LEU, university officials say it is unlikely that federal aid will be enough to outweigh the cost of changing to low-grade fuel. "Engineering departments have been hard strapped to keep current as it is," says DiMeglio, and nuclear engineering has been particularly at a disadvantage because of low enrollment. "Some deans are going to look at this new rule and see it as just the first of a whole string of new requirements." They are nervous about another new rule waiting in the wings at the NRC that would require improvements in campus security systems. "Deans may decide that it's better to put their money into something that doesn't have these problems, like robotics," DiMeglio says.—**ELIOT MARSHALL**

Morocco Reports Lethal Radiation Accident

Moroccan newspapers reported in June what appears to be the gravest accident on record involving a radioactive source. According to *L'Opinion,* six members of a family have died and 20 other people have been exposed to high levels of radiation from an industrial device. Several of the survivors have been flown "overseas" for treatment, *L'Opinion* notes. A health physicist associated with the World Health Organization (WHO) says they have been taken to the clinic of Dr. Henri Jammet at the Institut Curie outside Paris. It is one of two WHO radiopathology centers in the world (the other is in Oak Ridge, Tennessee) that provide emergency treatment for radiation victims.

Although few details are available, officials at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission in Washington believe the device that did the damage was an iridium-192 radiography source used in photographing metal welds. It seems to have been taken without authorization from a site where a nuclear plant is being built near Medina.—**ELIOT MARSHALL**