pad; re-entry following an unsuccessful launch; and short orbital lifetime leading to re-entry and terrestrial impact in unknown and uncontrolled areas. In addition, approval had to be obtained at the highest level. Kerr noted: "It was critical for the Department of State and the president and his staff to understand the potentials of these launches. The potential for political repercussions was great in case of failure with impact and possible fuel release on foreign territories."[31]

During the period of SNAP-9A preparations, representatives from the AEC, DOD, and NASA outlined areas and procedures for improving the consistency and efficiency of the review and approval process. They decided to use an *ad hoc* panel representative of the concerned agencies, rather than creating a standing interagency committee. One factor influencing this decision was that a standing committee which included public participation would have difficulties handling classified information. As early as January 1963 a model charter had been developed for a possible interagency review committee.[32] Eventually the safety review panel was given the name "Interagency Nuclear Safety Review Panel" (INSRP). Although these panels were always newly constituted *ad hoc*, through many years of safety reviews Dix was the assigned AEC coordinator and Kerr the assigned NASA coordinator.

In the spring of 1964 a report to the Commission by the General Manager and the Director of Regulation set down an interagency safety review mechanism close to the one that eventually was adopted.[33] The procedures agreed upon relied on the creation of an *ad hoc* panel for each mission and included development of a public information package and safety report. These prepared packages anticipated the mishaps that might occur and contained appropriate safety information for distribution.

Basic considerations on safety began with the fuel used in the devices. The AEC selected plutonium-238 as the fuel for the first SNAP space missions because it emitted primarily "alpha" particles (the least penetrating type of particles) and had a relatively long half-life, could not support a chain reaction, and even in large masses presented no danger of nuclear explosions. The danger lay in its poisonous qualities if inhaled or ingested by living organisms. The AEC described the many tests, conducted on plutonium-238 fuel capsules for SNAP devices, that examined ability to survive launch pad accidents safely, to withstand impact, and to burn up on re-entry in the atmosphere.[34] Dix said: "We went with a 'burn-up on re-entry' concept in the early days because those