



NRC NEWS

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Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

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NRC LAUNCHES PILOT PROGRAM REGARDING ITS INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT OF MEDICAL PROGRAM

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is revising inspection and enforcement of its nuclear medicine licensees to focus more closely on areas most important to safety. The agency will conduct a pilot to test the new program, similar to initiatives underway for nuclear power plants and fuel cycle facilities regulated by the agency.

The initiative to revise the inspection and enforcement program for medical facilities reflects the agency's desire to apply more objective and safety-significant criteria in assessing the performance of all its licensees, as well as the need to effectively regulate with a smaller staff and budget.

The goals of the new initiative are to focus inspections based on results of licensee performance, to maintain safety and protect the environment, to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden, to increase public confidence, and to increase regulatory efficiency, effectiveness, and realism.

The pilot program will focus inspections on the use of unsealed radioactive material in medical procedures. This type of material is used in diagnosis of cancerous tumors, detection of problems within body organs, or treatment of certain types of cancer. The agency regulates approximately 1100 licenses in this category, representing nearly 21 percent of all materials licensees in the agency.

This new program will allow the inspector greater flexibility in documenting violations of lesser significance on a standard form that does not require a written response from the licensee.

The revised nuclear medicine inspection program will focus on licensee activities aimed at minimizing overexposures to workers or members of the public, unauthorized offsite releases of radioactivity or losses of licensed material, and unauthorized uses of licensed material. The new inspection and enforcement program will be used in implementing the NRC's current regulations for the medical uses of radioactive material. Those regulations are currently under review after several

years of extensive comments and public meetings across the country. If the regulations are revised, the new program will also be applied to them.

If successful, the one-year pilot program may be used more broadly across the agency's other materials safety programs.

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