

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NRC STAFF SCHEDULES ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE IN PONCE, PUERTO RICO TO DISCUSS NUCLEAR MATERIAL SAFETY CONCERNS WITH LOCAL COMPANY

Meeting Is Open To Observation By The Public

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a predecisional enforcement conference in Ponce, Puerto Rico, at 10:00 A.M. on November 9 with Victor E. Rivera Associates, Geotechnical Engineers, to discuss regulatory safety concerns associated with the company's use of licensed radioactive material.

An NRC inspection conducted September 29 at the company's Ponce facility resulted in identification of five apparent violations for which NRC officials say they are considering escalated enforcement action.

The apparent violations involve failure to secure licensed materials from unauthorized removal or access; failure to limit the radiation dose rate in an unrestricted area to levels within regulatory limits; failure to post (with a required warning sign) a radiation area; failure to label containers of licensed materials; and failure to check packages for physical condition prior to shipment. NRC officials said that, although the dose rate in an unrestricted area was higher than allowable, there were no indications of excessive exposure to personnel.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that a determination has been made that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. The purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee with an opportunity to point out errors that may have been made in NRC inspection reports, and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a civil penalty, will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later date.

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