



NRC NEWS

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NRC, N.J. COMPANY TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS INVOLVING GAUGE

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of a Mays Landing, N.J.-based company on Thursday, June 23, to discuss three apparent violations of agency regulations involving the control, security and transportation of a nuclear gauge.

Known as a predecisional enforcement conference, the meeting is scheduled to begin at 10:30 a.m. at the NRC Region I Office, 475 Allendale Road in King of Prussia, Pa. It will be open to the public for observation and NRC staff will be available to answer questions before the session is adjourned.

The apparent violations were identified as the result of an NRC special inspection conducted in response to an April 25th incident. On that date, a nuclear gauge owned by Craig Testing Laboratories, Inc., fell out of a truck driven by one of its employees and could not be located. The loss of the gauge, which contains americium-241 and cesium-137 and is used for such purposes as measuring soil density, occurred in Pocopson (Chester County), Pa. The employee had been performing work at a temporary job site in that town. Although the transport case holding the gauge had been chained to the truck, the chain had several feet of slack, the case was not locked and the vehicle's tailgate was not closed to a locked position.

It was not until four days later that the gauge was recovered. A local citizen who found the device read about the search for the gauge in an area newspaper, contacted the company and arranged for its return. Craig Testing reported to the NRC that the gauge was recovered in good condition, with no visible damage. Subsequent testing indicated there was no leakage and therefore no workers or members of the public were exposed to any radiation due to the event.

An NRC special inspection was conducted on April 27 at the company's main office in Mays Landing and at the temporary job site in Pocopson. Based on the results of the inspection, three apparent violations were identified: a failure to control or maintain constant surveillance of licensed nuclear material that is in an unrestricted area and is not in storage; a failure to ensure that a portable nuclear density gauge or its outer container is locked; and a failure to comply with the applicable requirements of U.S. Department of Transportation regulations when transporting a nuclear gauge.

The purpose of the June 23rd meeting is to obtain information to enable the NRC to determine what, if any, enforcement action is warranted. For instance, there will be an effort to come to a common understanding of the facts and a discussion of root causes of the event and corrective actions undertaken by the company.

No decision will be made by the NRC staff at the session. Rather, NRC management will render a decision sometime in the near future.

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