



NRC NEWS

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NRC PROPOSES \$3,250 FINE FOR N.J. FIRM FOR NUCLEAR GAUGE VIOLATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$3,250 civil penalty for a Mays Landing, N.J.-based company for three violations of agency regulations involving the control, security and transportation of a nuclear gauge. The device, which contains radioactive material, is used for industrial purposes such as measuring the density of soil at construction sites.

The 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 gauge, equipped with americium-241 and cesium-137 sources, was lost 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.

Approximately five days later, the gauge was recovered. A local citizen who read about the loss in an area newspaper found it, contacted the company and arranged for its return. The firm 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.

Craig Testing discussed the violations with NRC staff during a predecisional enforcement conference on June 23.

Based on information gathered during the inspection and provided by the company at the June 23rd meeting, the NRC has identified three violations of agency requirements. They are: 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.

“Although the source was in the shielded condition at the time the gauge was found by the member of the public, these violations are of concern to the NRC because (1) the failure to control

radioactive material resulted in the gauge being in the public domain for approximately five days; and (2) such sources can result in unintended radiation exposure to an individual if the source is not in the shielded position,” NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins wrote in a letter to the company regarding the enforcement action.

Craig Testing has taken steps to prevent a recurrence, including reinstructing all of its nuclear gauge operators in proper security and handling procedures, as well as increasing required radiation safety officer visits to job sites to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements.

The company is required to provide the NRC with a written reply within 30 days.

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