



NRC NEWS

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NRC DISPATCHES INSPECTOR TO NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS & TECHNOLOGY LAB IN COLORADO FOLLOWING CONTAMINATION EVENT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has sent a health physics inspector to a National Institutes of Standards & Technology lab in Boulder, Co., in response to a plutonium contamination event there.

The lab, which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, holds an NRC license authorizing it to possess and use radioactive materials used in scientific research. The lab notified the NRC that a small glass vial containing about a quarter of a gram of plutonium powder ruptured, resulting in the contamination of two workers and the lab in which they were working on June 9.

Two researchers who discovered the broken vial received some contamination on their hands, but were able to wash it off using soap and water. Medical tests are being conducted to monitor any adverse health effects. The lab's health physics staff responded and detected contamination in a small lab, which was sealed and will be decontaminated. Some contaminated found in an adjoining hallway has been cleaned up. Other workers at the lab had some trace contamination on their shoes and clothing, but it was washed off, NIST reported.

The NRC inspector will interview workers, inspect records, monitor the licensee's response to the event, and review the licensee's adherence to NRC regulations for the storage, handling and use of radioactive materials. Findings will be detailed in a written report that will be made publicly available.

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