



NRC NEWS

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NRC PROPOSES \$8,500 FINE AGAINST UNITED STATES AIR FORCE WRIGHT PATTERSON MEDICAL CENTER

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed fining the United States Air Force (USAF) Wright Patterson Medical Center in Dayton, Ohio, \$8,500 for the loss of a small sealed radioactive source used in conjunction with a portable nuclear medical gamma camera.

In October 2011, the NRC conducted an inspection when it was notified that a small amount of sealed americium-241, the size of a grain of rice, was missing from a locked storage container. When in service, the sealed source is attached to a wand used to mark areas of interest on images captured using a medical gamma camera. Inspectors found that Air Force staff had been verifying that the storage container was locked but not doing a visual check to ensure the source was present. This practice occurred between Nov. 2004 and Sep. 2011 until an employee noticed that the material was missing.

The USAF received a notice of violation for failure to conduct semiannual inventory of a sealed medical source and the failure to properly secure the source. The NRC considers the loss of radioactive material, no matter how small, a safety and security concern. Therefore, the NRC has classified these violations as a Severity Level III. Severity level I represents the greatest significance and severity level IV the lowest level.

In a March 5 letter to the NRC, the USAF accepted the violations and outlined the corrective actions it had taken to include searches of all storage locations in the facility, reviews of all inventory documents, and interviews with past radiation safety officers in an effort to locate the missing source. Also, the USAF has imposed long-term corrective actions to include making a photographic inventory of all radioactive sources; improved record keeping; and annual radiation safety training for all nuclear medicine staff with emphasis on properly securing and conducting inventory of radioactive material.

Because the licensee has had no prior violations and because it took prompt and effective corrective actions, the NRC is issuing the base penalty of \$8,500 due to the loss of a sealed source. There is no reason to believe that malicious intent was involved and does not pose a significant safety risk to the public.

Copies of the enforcement actions will be posted on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/enforcement/actions>. The results of the NRC inspection can be found in Inspection Report 030-28641/11-006 and ADAMS Accession Number ML12101A057.

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