



# NRC NEWS

**U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION**

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## **NRC Requests Organizations to Report on Tritium Exit Signs in Their Possession**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has requested 61 organizations to check tritium exit signs in their possession against their records and to report any lost or missing signs to the agency.

The NRC's action follows an inspection of Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., conducted in December and discussed in a meeting with Wal-Mart officials this week. A year-long audit by Wal-Mart identified approximately 15,000 tritium exit signs lost, missing, or otherwise unaccounted for at its stores and warehouses nationwide. Wal-Mart, which kept the NRC informed of its audit, expects to submit a formal report to the agency in late January.

Tritium exit signs pose little or no threat to public health and safety and do not constitute a security risk. However, the NRC requires proper recordkeeping and disposal of all radioactive materials. Proper handling and recordkeeping are important, because a damaged or broken sign could cause minor radioactive contamination of the immediate vicinity, requiring a potentially expensive clean up.

“Wal-Mart’s inability to account for all the tritium exit signs the company purchased demonstrates that organizations may not be fully aware of the regulatory requirements for owning these signs,” said George Pangburn, deputy director of the NRC’s Office of Federal and State Materials and Environmental Management Programs. “The NRC wants to be certain that organizations are aware of their responsibility to properly account for tritium exit signs in their possession and to dispose of them properly at the end of their useful life.”

In a “demand for information” issued today, the NRC asked organizations possessing 500 or more tritium exit signs to report in writing to the NRC within 60 days the following information:

- An explanation of how the organization ensures compliance with regulatory requirements applying to the possession, transfer and disposal of tritium exit signs the organization has acquired;
- A confirmation of the total number of signs possessed, and whether this matches the number in the organization's records;
- The reasons for any discrepancies, and actions taken or planned to locate any missing signs;
- Actions taken or planned to prevent future losses.

The organizations receiving the demand for information were identified through the NRC's General License Tracking System, which contains information filed by device manufacturers regarding initial distribution of the signs. The organizations include large retail store chains, churches, federal and state agencies, school districts and universities, among others.

The signs are considered "generally licensed devices," because they are inherently safe enough to be handled or used by anyone with no radiation training or experience. Although purchasers – known as "general licensees" – do not need authorization from the NRC or a state regulatory agency to possess the signs, they are subject to certain regulatory requirements regarding handling, transfer or disposal of the signs. They are also subject to NRC or state inspection and enforcement action (including fines) for violating those requirements.

From 2001 through 2007, Wal-Mart purchased approximately 70,000 tritium exit signs to install in its stores and warehouses. Last year, after discovering some signs were missing, the company initiated an audit of all its facilities. The NRC and its Agreement States (the 35 states that regulate radioactive materials under agreements with the NRC) have been kept informed of Wal-Mart's progress in its audit. The company is now in the final stages of removing tritium exit signs from its facilities and returning them to the manufacturers in accordance with NRC regulations for proper disposal.

The NRC reminded manufacturers and general licensees of the regulatory requirements for tritium exit signs in a Regulatory Issue Summary ([RIS 2006-25](#)) issued in December 2006. The requirements are also spelled out in NUREG-1556, Consolidated Guidance for Materials Licensees, Volume 16, [Appendix L](#). More recently, the NRC posted a [Fact Sheet](#) on tritium exit signs on its Web site.

## Organizations Requested to Report on Tritium Exit Signs in Their Possession

Air Cruisers Co., Wall, N.J.	Dupont, Wilmington, Del.
Alton Iron Works, Inc., Windsor, Conn.	Eli Lilly, Indianapolis, Ind.
Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, Anchorage, Alaska	Essex County Correctional Facility and Sheriff's headquarters, Middleton, Mass.
AMC Theaters, Kansas City, Mo.	Federal Corrections, Washington D.C.
American Airlines, Dallas, Texas	Federated Retail Holdings, Inc., St. Louis, Mo.
AMR Corporation, Fort Worth, Texas	Feldman Electric, New Cumberland, Pa.
Anchorage School District, Anchorage, Alaska	Franklin Electric Co., Bluffton, Ind.
Atlantic Aviation, Plano, Texas	Giant Food, Landover, Md.
Avon Community Schools Corp., Avon, Ind.	Goodrich Corp., Charlotte, N.C.
Bed, Bath & Beyond, Union, N.J.	Helicopter Support Inc., Trumbull, Conn.
Boeing Co. Corporate Offices, Chicago, Ill.	Herb Stevens Labor & Industry Building, Trenton, N.J.
BP Exploration Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska	Hilton Hotels Corp., Beverly Hills, Calif.
Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah	Home Depot, Atlanta, Ga.
Bristol-Myers Squibb Co., New York, N.Y.	Honeywell International, Inc., Morristown, N.J.
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah	Isolite Corp., Berwyn, Pa.
Defense General Supply Center, Richmond, Va.	MEMC Electronic Materials, Inc., St. Peters, Mo.
Department of the Air Force, USAF Radioisotope Committee, Bolling AFB, Washington, D.C.	Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vt.
Department of the Army, Army Material Command, Ft. Belvoir, Va.	Mount Holly Center, Lumberton, N.J.
Department of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Radiation Safety Committee, Washington, D.C.	NASA, Washington, D.C.
Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Little Rock, Ark.	Nassau Electric, West Collingswood Heights, N.J.
Dominion Virginia Power, Richmond, Va.	National Amusements Corp., Dedham, Mass.
	New Jersey Association of School Administration, Trenton, N.J.
	Northwest Airlines, Inc., Eagan, Minn.
	Outrigger Hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii
	Pacific Electric Sales Agency, Honolulu, Hawaii

## **Organizations Requested to Report on Tritium Exit Signs in Their Possession**

Ridgewood Board of Education,  
Ridgewood, N.J.

S.A.S. Technical Forwarding Dept.,  
Newark, N.J.

Smithsonian Institution, Washington,  
D.C.

State Farm Insurance, Bloomington, Ill.

State of Alaska, Dept. of Health &  
Social Services, Radiological Health  
Program, Anchorage, Alaska

Stusser Electric Co., Anchorage, Alaska

Thomson, Indianapolis, Ind.

U.S. Army Garrison – Rock Island  
Arsenal, Rock Island, Ill.

U.S. Coast Guard, Washington D.C.

U.S. General Services Administration,  
Washington, D.C.

U.S. Military Academy, West Point,  
N.Y.

U.S. Postal Service, Washington, D.C.

United Airlines, Chicago, Ill.

University of Alaska, Anchorage, Alaska

Wallens Ridge Prison, Big Stone Gap,  
Va.