



NRC NEWS

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NRC, W.VA. FIRM TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS INVOLVING PORTABLE NUCLEAR GAUGE

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of a Morgantown, W.Va.-based company on Wednesday, Aug. 9, to discuss two apparent violations of agency regulations involving maintaining proper control of a nuclear gauge.

The meeting, known as a predecisional enforcement conference, is scheduled to begin at 1 p.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 after the conference.

The apparent violations by Triad Engineering, Inc., stem from an event on March 14, 2006. On that day, a Triad employee was transporting a portable nuclear density gauge in an open-bed pickup truck from the company's Purcellville, Va., field office to a temporary job site. The gauge, which contains small amounts of NRC-licensed radioactive material in sealed holders and is used for such purposes as measuring soil density, was stored in a locked transport container. The container had not been secured to the truck and the vehicle's tailgate was not closed.

As the truck turned onto a public roadway from the facility's driveway, the container fell off the vehicle onto the roadway. The Triad employee did not realize this had occurred until two members of the public working nearby alerted him. The citizens also notified local police, who in turn contacted the local fire marshal. After recovering the device and returning it to the field office, company personnel performed checks and determined that the container and the gauge were not damaged. The event did not result in radioactive exposures to any members of the public.

In response to the incident, the company has taken corrective actions that include mandatory refresher training for its employees.

An NRC special inspection performed in May and June of this year to review the circumstances surrounding the event identified two apparent violations: (1) A failure to secure the gauge from unauthorized removal by using a minimum of two independent physical controls that form tangible barriers; and (2) a failure to secure the transport container to prevent shifting during normal transport conditions.

The purpose of the Aug. 9th meeting is to obtain information to enable the NRC to determine what, if any, enforcement action is warranted. Examples of that information would be a common understanding of the facts, root causes of the event and corrective actions taken by the company.

No decision will be made by the NRC staff at the session. Rather, NRC management will render a decision at a later date after considering the information presented during the meeting.

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