



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.
Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. I-05-033

Contact: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

June 9, 2005

E-mail: opa1@nrc.gov

NRC, PA. COMPANY TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATION INVOLVING GAUGE

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of a Pottstown, Pa.-based company on Thursday, June 16, to discuss an apparent violation 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 before the session is adjourned.

The apparent violation stems from an event on April 5 in which a nuclear gauge owned by David Blackmore & Associates was damaged at a temporary work site on Egypt Road in Upper Providence (Montgomery County), Pa. The Pottstown company is an engineering consulting firm that provides geotechnical and environmental services at construction sites. At approximately 11 a.m. that day, the gauge was crushed by a bulldozer after being left unattended by its user. The gauge contains americium-241 and cesium-137 and is used for such purposes as measuring soil density.

Actions by company personnel in response to the incident were prompt and in accordance with emergency procedures. The area around the damaged gauge was quickly roped off and other workers at the site and the company's Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) were notified. The RSO, in turn, informed the NRC. The radioactive sources inside the gauge were determined to be intact and radiation surveys of the area by the RSO and an NRC inspector who responded to the site did not reveal any contamination.

The apparent violation identified by the NRC as a result of a follow-up inspection involves the company's failure to effectively control and maintain constant surveillance of licensed nuclear material – in this case, the gauge – in an unrestricted area, as required by agency regulations.

The purpose of the June 16th 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 undertaken by the company.

No decision will be made by the NRC staff at the session. Rather, NRC management will render a decision sometime in the near future.

###