

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC DENIES EXEMPTION REQUESTS ON
RADIOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

A new Nuclear Regulatory Commission requirement for upgraded radiography equipment--designed to provide greater health and safety protection to workers and the public--is now in effect. The NRC is, for the most part, denying requests to exempt licensees from the January 10 requirement.

Radiographers using equipment not in compliance with the new regulation, will be subject to a \$5,000 civil penalty. But if they ordered new equipment in good faith for prompt replacement by last week's deadline, NRC will exercise enforcement discretion and not impose a civil penalty or move to suspend such licensees' operations.

Radiography is a process that uses radioactive materials to make X-ray-like pictures of the inside of large objects, such as metal castings or welded pipelines, to see whether they contain flaws.

The NRC revised its regulations to include the radiography equipment upgrade requirements on January 10, 1990. Licensees were informed that the regulations state that newly manufactured equipment must meet the new requirements by January 10, 1992, and that all equipment in use must meet the new requirements by January 10 of this year. The phase-in period was to allow the manufacturers time to develop newly designed devices, and allow licensees adequate time to replace existing devices.

The changes were in response to several significant radiation overexposures associated with radiography. Between 1984 and 1993, industrial radiographers represented only a small percentage of licensees, but reported a significant number of the whole body radiation exposures in excess of NRC limits.

As a result of Congressional and licensee concerns last year about the deadline and about newly manufactured equipment, the NRC conducted a limited survey of licensees and radiography equipment manufacturers. The agency determined that there was no health and safety reason to extend the implementation deadline or exempt licensees from the requirements without justification and compensatory safety measures.

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