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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$2,750 FINE AGAINST ANHEUSER-BUSCH, INC.
FOR RADIATION SAFETY VIOLATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$2,750 fine against Anheuser-Busch, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri, for improperly dismantling and disposing of two nuclear gauges.

The company uses industrial gauges with a sealed radiation source containing americium-241 for level measurement and for detecting whether bottles are present inside packages.

In April, Anheuser-Busch began demolition work on a portion of a conveyer system which had been inactive for approximately 12 years. Attached to the inactive conveyer were two gauges that were used to ensure that empty packages no longer contained bottles. Company personnel, thinking the radioactive sources were no longer in the gauges, dismantled them and sent them to a scrap metal facility.

When Anheuser-Busch realized what had happened, it surveyed some scrap metal facilities and scrap metal on its plant site. Both gauge housings and one of the two americium-241 sources were found at the scrap metal facility. The source was intact within its stainless steel housing. Surveys of two smelting facilities where the scrap metal would be sent found no abnormal radiation levels or contamination.

The missing source was not located during the searches. Based on its assessment of possible scenarios, the company believes the source was most likely compacted with the scrap metal or melted with other scrap metal at a smelting facility.

(If the americium-241 source were compacted with other scrap metal, the source housing and other material surrounding it would most likely shield the radiation sufficiently to keep any radiation dose to the public below regulatory limits. If the source were melted with scrap metal, the americium-241 would most likely be dispersed in the molten metal and would not represent a significant safety hazard.)

NRC inspectors in May and June performed confirmatory surveys at Anheuser-Busch and the local scrap metal facility.

NRC inspectors noted that the gauges were removed from the conveyor by individuals not authorized to do so, despite manufacturer's labels warning that the devices are to be dismantled only by NRC-licensed individuals. The company also transferred the gauges to the scrap metal facility, a non-licensed company, which is another violation of NRC regulations.

The company has until October 2 to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the company may request a hearing.

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