

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC ORDERS INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF SOME ARMY
RADIATION SAFETY PROGRAMS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has directed the Department of the Army to arrange for an independent audit of one of its radiation safety programs and to report periodically to NRC on the findings and resulting corrective actions.

These requirements are incorporated in an order issued Wednesday, March 26, as the result of numerous deficiencies in the Army's program dating back almost five years. The order confirms commitments already made by the Army, which also has waived its right to a hearing on the order's provisions.

Activities affected are administered by the Armament and Chemical Acquisition and Logistics Activity of the Army Tank-Automotive and Armaments Command at Rock Island, Ill. The Rock Island command holds an NRC license for possession of tritium, a radioactive material which it uses for self-luminous firing control devices utilized in artillery. Other licenses authorize possession of americium-214 and nickel-63 for use in chemical agent detectors and monitors. All the licenses authorize the devices' use and storage at Army, Marine and Navy installations throughout the United States.

NRC has issued the order because of significant deficiencies in the Army's ability to manage these licensed activities, to ensure compliance with NRC requirements, or to correct promptly the problems found by its own internal audits. NRC has fined the Army a total of \$32,500 for violations found by inspections between June 1992 and August 1995, not only at Rock Island, but also at Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; Fort Irwin, Calif.; Fort McClellan, Ala.; and the Anniston (Ala.) Army Depot.

As the result of the more recent inspections, as well as the Army's own self-assessment, NRC has concluded that fundamental defects still exist, including extensive loss of control of

radioactive material and inadequate radiation safety officer oversight at Rock Island and other Defense Department installations.

In addition to requiring the Army to hire an independent consultant to audit the radiation safety program of these licensed activities, the order specifies that the audit must determine the Army's compliance with all NRC requirements and the status of commitments the Army has made in response to NRC enforcement actions since January 1992.

The order further requires NRC approval of the audit plan and sets out various corrective actions and related information to be provided to the NRC at 30, 60, 90 and 150-day intervals thereafter.

Any person adversely affected by the order, other than the Army, may request a hearing within 20 days.

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