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NRC PROPOSES \$8,800 FINE FOR ANVIL CORP.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a civil penalty of \$8,800 against the Anvil Corp., of Bellingham, Washington, for violating radiography safety rules that resulted in two employees receiving radiation exposures in excess of federal limits.

Radiography is an industrial procedure in which radiation is used to inspect the welds on piping and other metal components in much the way an X-ray is taken in medical applications. The safety violations occurred on November 20, 1998, at a company job site in Billings, Montana. A radioactive source was mistakenly left partially outside the shielded area of a radiography camera after use. Two workers operating the camera received substantial radiation exposures when they failed to follow basic radiation safety practices.

The radiographer's assistant received 11.8 rem, giving him a total annual radiation dose of 12.8 rem, and the radiographer received 3.9 rem, giving him a 5.7 rem annual radiation dose. Federal limits restrict the annual dose to a radiation worker to a maximum of five rem. A "rem" is the unit used to measure radiation exposure. In this case, the workers did not experience any immediate adverse health effects.

In its investigation of this incident, the NRC found that the radiographer failed to adequately supervise his assistant during radiography operations, neither worker adequately performed a required survey to be sure the radioactive source was fully shielded, and one worker failed to wear an operating personal dosimetry instrument during radiographic operations.

In a letter to Vern Grenier, Anvil's manager in Bellingham, NRC Regional Administrator Ellis W. Merschoff, said, ". . . because of the significance which the NRC assigns to radiation doses in excess of NRC limits, which were preventable by basic radiation safety practices, the NRC has decided . . . to impose a civil penalty. . . But for your actions in response to this event, the penalty would have been substantially higher."

Anvil reported the incident to the NRC, conducted a thorough investigation and improved the safety of its operations.

The incident was judged to be a Severity Level II problem on the NRC's four-level scale, with Level I being the most serious. A Severity Level II problem has a base civil penalty of \$8,800 for radiography license holders.

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