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NRC STAFF PROPOSES FINE AGAINST WASHINGTON, D.C. HOSPITAL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$2,750 fine against Washington Hospital Center for six violations of NRC requirements. The violations, which collectively represent a breakdown in control of licensed activities, were found during a February inspection of the Washington, D.C., facility.

NRC inspectors found that radioactive waste was often mixed with other waste and then taken to the hospital's incinerator, which was not licensed for disposing of radioactive materials. When the incinerator's process radiation detector alarmed, indicating the presence of radioactive material, the untrained workers often attempted to determine the cause of the alarm by sorting through the waste, creating the potential for personal contamination.

The NRC staff has cited the hospital for six violations: the disposal of radioactive material by incineration; the failure to perform adequate surveys to identify the type and activity of the material after the process radiation detector alarmed; failure to train personnel who were handling radioactive waste; failure by workers to wear gloves when handling radioactive waste; and two violations related to the failure to maintain appropriate security and control of radioactive waste.

In a letter to the hospital, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller said, "These violations demonstrate that a significant weakness existed with respect to attention to, and control of, radioactive material waste activities at Washington Hospital Center."

He noted that a confirmatory action letter was issued

in March, documenting the hospital's commitments to correct the identified deficiencies and take appropriate action to prevent recurrence. Mr. Miller added that hospital officials have stopped incinerating radioactive waste and have taken other corrective actions, including hiring a consultant to evaluate conditions at the facility, increasing the radiation safety staff and retraining the staff.

The hospital has 30 days to pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that all or part of it be withdrawn.

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