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Region III Office of Public Affairs  
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$2,500 FINE AGAINST THE DIAL CORPORATION  
FOR IMPROPER DISPOSAL OF A NUCLEAR GAUGE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$2,500 fine against The Dial Corporation, London, Ohio, for the improper disposal of a gauge containing radioactive materials.

The situation which resulted in this enforcement action came to NRC's attention last November. At that time, Dial informed the agency that, during an inventory, plant employees had found a control panel of an industrial nuclear gauge, but could not locate the gauge housing which contained a sealed source of americium-241. NRC later performed a special inspection at the Dial plant as the result of the notification.

Dial used the gauge to measure the thickness of fabric softener on laundry dryer sheets produced at the plant. The gauge was installed in 1977 and was used until approximately 1990. Plant workers last reported seeing it in 1992.

A review of documents by Dial at all of its facilities and at the gauge manufacturer found no records indicating the proper disposal of the gauge. Based on information from the licensee and from its own inspection, NRC has concluded that the radioactive source was transferred to an unlicensed recipient, in violation of agency regulations.

"This violation is of significant regulatory concern because Dial does not know the circumstances surrounding the loss, the ultimate disposition of the material, or the possibility of any individual exposures to radiation," said NRC Regional Administrator Hubert J. Miller in notifying the company of the fine.

The sealed source containing americium-241 would not represent a significant health hazard as long as it remained in the gauge housing with the shutter closed. If it were disposed of with the normal trash it would not represent a significant environmental hazard.

The Dial Corporation has until July 17 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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