



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO MEET WITH UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS ON APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet June 12 in Lisle, Illinois, with officials of Southeast Missouri State University for a predecisional enforcement conference to discuss possible safety violations at the Cape Girardeau, Missouri, campus.

The meeting will be at 10 a.m. CDT in the Third Floor Conference Room, NRC Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, in Lisle. The meeting is open for public observation. Members of the NRC staff will be available following the meeting for questions from the public.

The possible violations include a radiation overexposure, possession of a radioactive material not authorized under the university's NRC license, failure to do adequate surveys, and the loss of radioactive material. The potential overexposure involved a contract employee of the university who was on campus the week of June 12, 2000, doing work involving americium-241 contamination in an university building. The individual potentially received an estimated dose to the bone of 263 rems. The NRC's annual limit for radiation exposure to the bone is 50 rem. A rem is a unit used to measure the amount of radiation absorbed by the human body. There were no immediate medical effects to the employee.

The possible violations were identified following a February 16, 2000, NRC inspection which revealed several problems with the university's radiation program and led to the discovery of americium-241 contamination in Magill Hall, one of the university's science buildings. Since then the contamination has been cleaned up and the building released for unrestricted use.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that a determination has been made that violations have occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. The purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance, to provide the university with an opportunity to point out errors that may have been made in NRC inspection reports, and to enable the university to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a civil penalty, will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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