NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF PROPOSES $3,000 FINE AGAINST PALMERTON & PARRISH, INC. OF MISSOURI FOR FAILING TO CONTROL LICENSED MATERIAL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a $3,000 fine against Palmerton & Parrish, Inc., of Springfield, Missouri, for violating NRC requirements associated with the loss of a portable moisture density gauge containing two sealed radioactive sources.

The gauge, which is used to measure soil conditions at road and building sites, was later recovered. The gauge was not damaged in the incident and consequently there was no immediate health or safety concern.

On July 31, the company notified the NRC that a portable moisture density gauge had been left unattended on the bed of an open-bed pickup truck and was not checked when the driver proceeded to a second job site. Consequently, the gauge had fallen from the truck and was lost along a highway. A member of the public subsequently found the gauge and returned it to the company.

The gauge contained 8 millicuries of cesium-137 and 40 millicuries of americium-241 in two sealed sources and was being used at a temporary job site in Green County, Missouri.

The NRC staff identified four violations involving the incident including: failure to maintain control of radioactive material that is in an unrestricted area and that is not in storage; failure to transport the gauge in its proper container; failure to brace the gauge during transportation; and failure to lock the gauge while being transported.

In notifying the company of the proposed fine, NRC Regional Administrator James E. Dyer noted that Palmerton & Parrish had taken corrective actions to prevent a reoccurrence of the situation, including additional training for employees. However, he said, a newly adopted enforcement policy provides that a fine be proposed to reflect the significance of the violation and emphasize the importance of maintaining control of licensed material. The specified fines included in the enforcement policy were developed to correspond to roughly three times the cost of proper disposal.

Palmerton & Parrish has 30 days to pay the fine or protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the company may request a hearing.

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