



NRC NEWS

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NRC PROPOSES \$3,000 FINE AGAINST N.J. FIRM OVER LOSS OF NUCLEAR GAUGE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$3,000 civil penalty against a New Jersey company for a violation of NRC requirements associated with the apparent theft of a nuclear gauge last fall. The gauge, which contains radioactive material, is used for industrial purposes such as measuring soil density.

Trap Rock Industries Inc. of Kingston, N.J., reported to the NRC that on the evening of October 24, 2001, the gauge was left unattended by its user for approximately a half-hour at a temporary job site in Ewing, N.J. When the user returned, the gauge and a cart on which it was resting were missing.

At the time, the device's cesium-137 radioactive source was in the shielded position. As long as the source is shielded, there is no radiation hazard to gauge users or members of the public. However, the NRC is concerned about the incident because 1.) the failure to adequately control radioactive material resulted in the subsequent loss of the source; and 2.) such sources can result in substantial unintended radiation dose to an individual if the source is removed from the shielded position. The fine has been proposed because of the company's failure to secure the gauge from unauthorized removal or access.

It should be noted that Trap Rock has taken steps in response to the loss, including immediately contacting the state police and conducting a search for the device; advertising the loss of the gauge in local newspapers and offering a reward for its return; counseling and taking disciplinary action against the gauge user; and providing refresher training to all gauge users.

The company is required to provide the NRC with a written reply to the violation within 30 days.

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