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NRC ISSUES MASTER MATERIALS LICENSE TO DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS FOR ITS MEDICAL FACILITIES ACROSS THE NATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a master materials license to the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs to take over principal regulatory functions for its medical facilities throughout the United States.

Previously, 116 VA medical facilities were each licensed separately by the NRC for various uses of radioactive materials for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. The new master materials license, encompassing those facilities previously licensed by the NRC, will be administered by the NRC's Region III Office in Lisle, Illinois.

The VA's program will be managed by its National Health Physics Program staff, located in North Little Rock, Arkansas. The VA license is the third of its type issued by the NRC. The Departments of the Navy and the Air Force also hold master materials licenses for the use of radioactive materials.

Under the new license, the VA will manage permits for each of its facilities, setting specific requirements for the uses of radioactive materials. The facilities will continue to operate within the rules and regulations of the NRC.

The VA will conduct its own inspections to make certain that its medical facilities are complying with NRC regulations and with the terms of the VA-issued permits. It will also take enforcement action if violations of requirements are identified. The NRC, however, will retain the authority to take enforcement action, if appropriate.

During the first two years, the NRC will conduct semiannual evaluations of the VA's performance under the master materials license. Then, the NRC will consider reducing its oversight to yearly evaluations.

In addition to these broad assessments, the NRC will continue to conduct independent inspections of a sample of VA medical facilities and, in some cases, accompany VA personnel on inspections.

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