



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa. 19406

www.nrc.gov

No. I-04-009

CONTACT: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

March 11, 2004

Email: opa1@nrc.gov

NRC PROPOSES \$3,000 FINE AGAINST WEST VIRGINIA FIRM FOR FAILURE TO CONSTANTLY CONTROL TWO NUCLEAR GAUGES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$3,000 civil penalty against a West Virginia company for a violation of NRC requirements involving a failure to secure or maintain constant surveillance of two portable nuclear gauges. The devices, which contain radioactive material, are used for industrial purposes such as measuring soil density.

During an NRC inspection on July 31, 2003, at G.A. Covey Engineering's facility in Sutton, W.Va., it was determined that an employee of the firm had left two portable nuclear gauges in an unlocked room for a short period of time. Both gauges contained radioactive sources consisting of approximately 10 millicuries of cesium-137 and 50 millicuries of americium-241.

While the radioactive sources were in the shielded position when they were left unattended and unsecured, the NRC is citing a violation and issuing a fine because (1) the failure to control radioactive material could have resulted in the theft of the gauges; and (2) such sources can result in a substantial unintended radiation dose to an individual if removed from the shielded position.

In a letter to the NRC dated January 23, G.A. Covey Engineering listed corrective actions taken to prevent a recurrence, including immediately locking the door to the storage area; re-instructing all gauge users regarding compliance with NRC requirements; implementing a policy to keep the keys to the storage room in a locked key box; implementing a policy to perform walk-through inspections at various times of the day to ensure the door to the storage area is locked; and implementing periodic reviews for all employees, with more formal training for frequent gauge users.

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

###