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THORIUM IN GLASS LENSES.

At a recent meeting on radiation safety, Bob McMillan from the Materials Research Support Division, Fort Belvoir, Virginia, elaborated on a continuing effort on the part of the military to identify thorium containing lenses in various optical equipment.

You may recall about a year ago the Army reported to us the finding of about 30 percent of their "sniper-scopes" contained thorium glass in the eyepiece lense. In some cases, this occurred because lenses were being supplied to companies assembling the devices without identifying the thorium content. We have an investigation going in Regulatory Operations to trace the source of thorium glass in such lenses. We have two objectives:

1. determine the extent of the problem; 2. if indicated, impose requirements.

Mr. McMillan indicated they are now receiving equipment containing glass lenses supplied by foreign glass manufacturers as well as U.S. glass makers. The Army is insisting that the suppliers certify that the glass contains less than .05 percent thorium. Difficulties arise:

1. as to the methods of determining the thorium content;
2. some of the suppliers are identifying lanthanum oxide but the Army is finding thorium present; and
3. defining an acceptable level of exposure for the eye to alpha radiation.

Mr. McMillan plans to write a letter to us offering to provide us with the information they have developed in their program. We will be pulling together what information we have and determining the status of Regulatory Operation's investigation, prior to that meeting.

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