

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL SAFETY AND SAFEGUARDS
WASHINGTON, DC 20555-0001

June 11, 2007

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE 2007-20: USE OF BLANK AMMUNITION

ADDRESSEES

All power reactors, Category I fuel cycle facilities, independent spent fuel storage installations, conversion facility, and gaseous diffusion plants.

PURPOSE

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is issuing this information notice (IN) to inform addressees of operating experience concerning blank rifle ammunition. It is expected that recipients review the information for applicability to their facilities or operations and consider actions, as appropriate, to avoid similar problems. However, suggestions contained in this IN are not NRC requirements; therefore, no specific action or written response is required.

DESCRIPTION OF CIRCUMSTANCES

In November 2006, at an NRC-licensed facility, a licensee discovered blank ammunition that did not meet the manufacturer's specifications. This blank ammunition could have resulted in serious injury or death. Two blank .223 caliber, ammunition cartridges were found to have copper-jacketed lead bullets inversely mounted in the blank's casings. The licensee also identified a blank cartridge weighing 10 grams due to additional gun powder, which exceeded the manufacturer's designated weight of approximately seven grams. The licensee uses blank ammunition in their exercise simulation system (ESS) training weapons. Firing an ESS training weapon with blank ammunition that does not meet the manufacturer's specifications could result in serious injury or even death.

The licensee discovered the condition while conducting a visual inspection and weight measurement of an initial random sample, and then an expanded random sample, of blank ammunition. The licensee began the practice of visually inspecting and weighing random samples of blank ammunition to check for quality following recent demands for ammunition by the military, which has caused a shortage of ammunition available to non-military organizations. To help fill the demand for blank ammunition, manufacturers have released what is labeled as "PD" rounds which identifies the ammunition as "Bulk". Bulk or PD ammunition may not meet military specifications and typically will not be purchased by the military. PD ammunition, which manufacturers consider safe for use, is sometimes the only ammunition available to non-military organizations.

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DISCUSSION

There is no NRC requirement for licensees to conduct quality assurance verifications of blank or live ammunition prior to use. However, such verifications would allow licensees to identify instances of ammunition that does not meet manufacturer specifications. In addition, other licensee's have adopted a safety practice that prior to using blank ammunition, the training exercise controller and the exercise participant verify that exercise participants are not in possession of live ammunition.

CONTACTS

This information notice requires no specific action or written response. Please direct any questions about this matter to the technical contact listed below.

/RA/

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301-415-6869
E-mail: jxw3@nrc.gov

Note: NRC generic communications may be found on the NRC public Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov>, under the Electronic Reading Room in Document Collections.

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