



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO HOLD PREDECISIONAL ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE IN ATLANTA WITH WESTINGHOUSE NUCLEAR FUEL PLANT OFFICIALS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference in Atlanta on July 9 to discuss with officials of the Westinghouse commercial nuclear fuel plant in Columbia, S.C., apparent violations of NRC requirements associated with a loss of custody in February of several small vials of licensed material.

The meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. (EDT) at the NRC Region II office, located in the Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center, 61 Forsyth St., S. W., Suite 23T85. The meeting will be open to observation by the public, and NRC officials will be available at its conclusion to answer questions from interested observers.

NRC officials said that plant personnel on Feb. 11 discovered that 16 small sample vials of uranium hexafluoride could not be located. It was determined that on Feb. 4, Westinghouse in Columbia received the samples in three containers, two of which were five-gallon cans and one in a box containing a five-gallon can. The vials contained a total of about 4.5 ounces of low-enriched uranium calculated to contain approximately 409.4 microcuries of radioactivity, which translates to a calculated maximum radiation dose of five millirem per year, or the amount of radiation one person would receive by taking a one-way flight from New York to London.

Unable to locate the material on Feb. 12, Westinghouse personnel conducted a plant-wide search which continued at a scrap metal recycling facility in Columbia, a metal shredding facility in Spartanburg and a landfill in Elgin, S.C. Visual searches and radiation surveys failed to locate the material or detect radioactivity at those sites.

Personnel from the NRC Region II office in Atlanta and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) conducted a plant walk-through and interviewed workers. The NRC staff interviewed workers at the scrap metal yard in Columbia and at the Elgin waste landfill. Neither the material nor any radioactivity was detected at those sites. The S.C. DHEC will determine if the landfill must be subject to additional search or remediation.

NRC officials are considering three apparent violations. There was an apparent failure to follow procedures for custody of licensed material or to confirm that the shipping containers

were free of contamination prior to discard; failure to prevent unauthorized removal of licensed material from a controlled area or to control and maintain required constant surveillance; and failure to read and sign procedures for handling and disposal of shipping containers.

No decision on enforcement action will be made at the conclusion of the meeting. NRC officials will review information presented by the licensee at the meeting and reach a decision on appropriate regulatory action at a later date.

Copies of the NRC letter to Westinghouse confirming the Enforcement Conference, and its enclosures, are available for public inspection on the NRC internet web page at www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html. The ML Number is ML081500508.

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