

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

November 10, 2009

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE 2009-25: SMALL ARMS FIRING RANGE SAFETY ISSUES

**ADDRESSEES**

All holders of operating licenses or construction permits for nuclear power reactors under the provisions of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 50, "Domestic Licensing of Production and Utilization Facilities." All holders of operating licenses for Category I fuel cycle facilities, Category III fuel cycle facilities, conversion facility, and enrichment facilities. All applicants for a combined license to construct nuclear power plants under 10 CFR Part 52, "Licenses, Certifications, and Approvals for Nuclear Power Plants." All holders of licenses for nuclear power plants undergoing decommissioning.

**PURPOSE**

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is issuing this information notice (IN) to inform recipients of recent events that occurred at small arms firing ranges owned and operated by NRC licensees to illustrate the potential hazards and the importance of adequate firing range design, range safety practices and procedures. The NRC expects that recipients will review the information for applicability to their facilities 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.

**BACKGROUND/DESCRIPTION OF CIRCUMSTANCES**

A number of licensees own and operate small arms firing ranges for use by their security force to conduct weapons and tactics training. These firing ranges are often located in the owner controlled area (OCA), sometimes in proximity to the protected area (PA). These ranges are used during hours of both daylight and darkness for various training activities. Some licensees also make their ranges available to external agencies, such as local law enforcement agencies (LLEAs), for similar training purposes. During such weapons and tactics training activities, the following events have taken place in recent years:

- (1) In May 2009, an incident occurred at an NRC-licensed facility's firing range while in use by an LLEA for a Special Weapons and Advanced Tactics training exercise. One of the training activities performed involved a "room clearing" exercise in which trainees were required to assess dangerous situations and shoot quickly while moving. In this instance, LLEA personnel improperly placed targets such that rounds would be discharged in a direction the range was not designed for and away from backstops and berms. As a result, several rounds exited the range area, and hit a number of occupied buildings within the OCA and PA. Although no personnel injuries or safety-related

equipment damage occurred, this event highlights the need to closely monitor range activities.

- (2) In December 2005, another licensee was conducting weapons and tactics training for site security personnel at its onsite range. While exiting the PA of the licensed facility, a plant employee was struck in the leg by a bullet. In this instance, the range design allowed for rounds to be discharged towards occupied plant areas. Subsequent to this event, the range was relocated and redesigned to ensure no potential existed for personnel injury or plant damage.

## DISCUSSION

The actual consequences of the above firing range events had no nuclear or radiological safety significance. However, the events did result in minor damage to plant buildings and an injury to a plant employee. The NRC recommends that licensees review their procedures and current range design and practices to ensure that similar events do not occur again. It is also equally important for licensees to develop and foster (within personnel who work with and handle firearms or conduct range activities) a culture that instills and maintains awareness and sensitivity to the hazards associated with such activities.

## CONTACT

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

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**ADAMS Accession Number:ML091940489**

**Log# 2538**

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