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NRC, Pentagon Sign MOU Outlining Roles in Unlicensed Radioactive Material Cleanup at Military Bases

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Department of Defense have finalized a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) describing roles in the cleanup of radium and other unlicensed radioactive materials at military sites. The MOU culminates several years of discussions between the NRC and the military.

Luminescent radium paint was widely used in vehicle instrumentation and other military applications until the 1960s. Because exposure to radium can increase the risk of adverse health effects, the military has a program to control or remediate legacy radium contamination and store and decontaminate equipment containing radium. Congress gave the NRC jurisdiction over radium and radium contamination in legislation passed in 2005. The military is also cleaning up other unlicensed radiological material.

The Environmental Protection Agency oversees cleanup work at some military sites under Superfund, more formally known as the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act. As documented in the MOU, the NRC has an independent federal oversight role at the other sites where the military is cleaning up radioactive materials.

The MOU provides two ways the NRC will be involved in military cleanup projects. The first way is to stay informed of remediation activities. At sites where the EPA has oversight under Superfund, NRC staff would limit our involvement to staying informed about remedial actions, oversight activities and issues. This approach could involve document reviews, site visits and meetings with the Army, Air Force, Navy, Defense Logistics Agency, EPA and state agencies.

The second way is to monitor remediation activities. At sites without EPA oversight, the NRC would monitor the cleanup of unlicensed radiological material, which could include document review and comment, site observations, and confirmatory radiological surveys. This monitoring would provide independent federal oversight to confirm the remediation adequately protects public health and safety and the environment.

The MOU can be found on the [NRC's website](#).