

NRC Evaluation of Historic Radium at Gilbert Clock Apartments

Radium, a radioactive substance found in nature, was processed for a variety of uses in the early 1900s. In the 1920s, workers at the Gilbert Clock Co., located at 13 Wallens Street in Winsted, Connecticut, applied glow-in-the-dark radium paint to clock dials. The two surviving buildings of the complex now house Gilbert Clock Apartments. The buildings were empty for approximately 20 years until in 1997 they were gutted and rebuilt, except for the existing exterior walls and heavy floor beams, and converted into apartments. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will survey the site to see if any radium remains.

The NRC is evaluating sites that may have handled radium. NRC inspectors are using instruments to look for the radiation from radium. If they find radium, the inspectors may recommend controls. Our goal is to ensure people's health is protected. We will not know for certain whether there is radium at a site until we complete our visit and analyze our findings.

Should I be concerned about my health?

It is important to keep in mind that the presence of radium by itself does not mean there would be health effects—even if it is above the NRC radiation limit. The NRC's regulations are designed to keep radium exposure very low—far below the level where we might expect to see health effects. If we do detect radium, we will provide more detailed information about our findings.

What happens next?

NRC inspectors will analyze the radiation readings and evaluate how a site is used to determine whether there is an immediate health and safety issue. The amount of time people spend in an area will help the NRC to know whether to recommend that the site owner control access to an area as a way to limit exposures to people in the area. Any controls we recommend would keep exposures below our regulatory limit.

How can I learn the results?

Once the NRC has completed its analysis, we will send a report to the site owner that will be available to the public on the NRC's radium website at <https://www.nrc.gov/materials/radium.html>.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you have questions about the NRC's program, contact the Office of Public Affairs, 301-415-8200. More information can be found at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/fact-sheets/radium.html>.



NRC inspectors are using sodium iodide detectors to look for radium