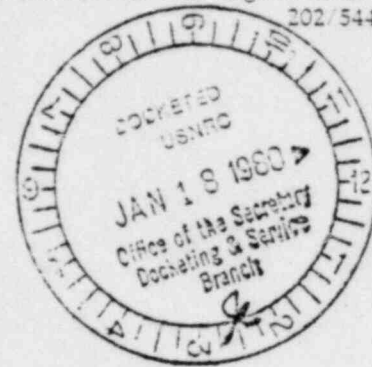


DOCKET NUMBER
PROPOSED RULE

PR -32(44FR68853)

14

Environmental Policy Institute
317 Pennsylvania Ave. S.E. Washington, D.C. 20003
202/544-8200



January 13, 1980

Secretary of the Commission
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, D.C. 20555
Attn: Docketing and Service Branch

Dear Sirs:

This is in response to the November 30 Federal Register proposed rule for adopting new requirements for labeling surfaces and point-of-sale packaging of gas and aerosol detectors.

While the Institute strongly disapproves of the use of ionization smoke detectors because a non-radioactive alternatives exists, we are pleased that the NRC has proposed labeling on the detector's external surface stating that it contains radioactive material. The additional information about the particular isotope inside the detector placed on the point-of-sale packaging is also a very important step in informing and educating the consumer. The decision not to include instructions for disposal of the detector, however, is unacceptable.

We understand that manufacturers and distributors currently holding licenses for the sale of these detectors are required by the NRC to dispose of used units at private NRC-licensed burial grounds, and that present NRC requirements specify procedures for transporting and discarding returned units. Without clear and accessible instructions, the homeowner will most likely throw the detector out with other trash for disposal in a local landfill or incinerator where it will become an increasingly large environmental hazard.

It is estimated that over 4 million gas and aerosol detectors are in use in the United States. Deliberate tampering with the the device is needed to expose the source, however, it is quite possible that the crushing of the detectors with other solid waste or incinerating them will also expose the americium to the environment.

The 1977 Guides for Naturally Occurring and Accelerator-Produced Radioactive Materials prepared by the Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, Inc. has recommended that disposal instruction be included on the label. The label or marking must be durable enough to remain legible for the useful life of the detector and be readily visible without disassembly of that part of the detector containing the radioactive material. The Institute urges the Commission to propose similar instructions in its rules.

We also recommend that the NRC work with the Consumer Product Safety Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Food and Drug Administration, and the State Radiation Departments in designing and implementing both a consumer education program on the ionization detectors and recall of these devices from the market place as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Elli Walters

Acknowledged by card... 1/18

Elli Walters
Radiation Health Information Project

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