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GENERAL COMMENTS ON INQUIRY AT
JONES AND LAUGHLIN STEEL CORPORATION
ALIQUIPPA, PENNSYLVANIA
REGARDING POSSIBLE OVEREXPOSURES AND INADEQUATE HAZARD EVALUATIONS FOR
USE OF GAUGES

The subject inquiry resulted in findings that indicate some consideration might well be given to a closer look at like programs. In the instant case, sealed sources in measuring gauges were being employed in a manner that could result in personnel exposure in excess of the allowable limits. The subject gauges contain 30 mCi Co-60 sources. Many gauges contain sources of much greater value. I have been uneasy for some time as to whether or not the health and safety aspects associated with use of such sources are being adequately controlled by the licensees.

Licensed programs employing such gauges are categorized K-V, and routine inspections are not scheduled. The referenced program may not be indicative of poorly managed programs elsewhere. However, the corporate radiation safety officer in attendance at the subject inquiry made the statement that their program was typical of others throughout the steel industry, where there is essentially no consideration by users as to possible radiation hazards. In this subject inquiry, such an attitude was apparently reflected by the supplier, also.

I am particularly concerned about use of a large gamma source in a gauge such that significant exposures could occur from stray radiation levels during down time and about use where maintenance, repair, servicing, installation and so forth are authorized to be done by the licensee. These licensees seem more to merit an assignment to E-III for initial inspection and then reassignment to E(2)-IV or a lower priority if found to involve no problems, rather than assignment to K-V. Although the application from J&L Steel suggested a good control over the gauges, this was not found to be the actual situation.

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Although there have occasionally been gauge licenses found to involve unsatisfactory control of hazards, I am not aware of current inspection experience on this. I suggest a review be made as to how well gauge users of the type discussed above are performing, with a view to considering a higher inspection priority.

CO:I:RJM

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