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For the Record

**NRC STATEMENT ON MISSING URANIUM PELLETS**  
**AT WESTINGHOUSE NUCLEAR FUEL FACILITY**

Westinghouse recently reported about 25 pounds of low-enriched uranium fuel pellets unaccounted for at its fuel fabrication facility in Columbia, S.C. We understand there are concerns about what may have happened to this material and whether it could pose a risk to public health and safety. An NRC inspection team concluded that the pellets likely remained on site and were placed back into a recycling process.

The NRC takes the potential loss of any NRC-licensed nuclear material very seriously. Recent statements in the media indicating that a small reactor could be built from the missing uranium fuel pellets and used by terrorists as a radiological weapon are misleading and alarmist.

In this case, the amount of fuel pellets (which could fit into a container about the size of a 5-lb coffee can) would not be enough material to produce a "small nuclear reactor," as at least one critic has suggested. According to NRC experts: "This quantity of material is not enough to result in a criticality event." Much more material would be needed to initiate and sustain a nuclear reaction to power even a small reactor. Neither are the pellets suitable for a "dirty bomb" because the quantity is small and the material is difficult to disperse. The pellets would pose very little direct radiation risk to the public because of the low levels of radiation they emit. Thus, even if the pellets had somehow left the site, and someone had the worst intentions, the pellets would pose very little risk to members of the public.