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NRC STAFF CITES AMBRIC ENGINEERING, INC FOR VIOLATION OF NRC REQUIREMENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited Ambric Engineering, Inc., for a violation of NRC requirements associated with the temporary loss of a radioactive source at a Delaware construction site. The staff has not proposed a fine for the violation.

The Philadelphia-based company used a moisture-density gauge at the Bally Meade development on Delaware State Route 92 in Claymont, Del., on June 25. Following that work, Ambric sent the gauge to its manufacturer for maintenance. On July 10, the manufacturer notified Ambric that the gauge's cesium-137 source was missing. That same day, an NRC inspector went to the site to review the incident and, on July 11, the NRC issued a confirmatory action letter confirming Ambric's agreement to restrict access to the area where the source was believed to have been lost, to survey the area, and to attempt to recover the lost source. The source was found buried under about two feet of dirt at the job site on July 14.

Based on the information developed during the inspection and at a subsequent predecisional enforcement conference in the NRC regional office, the NRC staff has determined one violation of NRC requirements occurred. The staff has cited Ambric for failing to control and maintain constant surveillance of licensed material that was in an unrestricted area and not in storage.

In a letter to the company, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller said, "The NRC is also concerned that this particular gauge was not inspected by the manufacturer prior to the loss of the source..... An inspection of the rod/source weld may have detected a crack before the source actually broke off in June 1997."

The NRC staff did not fine the company because its corrective actions were prompt and comprehensive. Those actions included training all gauge operators to recognize the symptoms

of a detached source and obtaining a survey meter to verify that a source has not become detached from the gauge’s source rod. Moisture density gauges use radioactive material to measure the moisture in soils used for road and building foundations.

The company has 30 days to respond to the notice of violation.

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