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STOLEN RADIOGRAPHIC CAMERA IS RECOVERED

The radiographic camera stolen from Mattingly Testing Services last week has been recovered. Acting on an anonymous telephone tip, company officials found the device, with its radioactive source locked inside, in a ditch about one block from Mattingly's office along the North Frontage Road to Interstate 90 in Lockwood, Montana.

The tip came just before 9 a.m. on Thursday to Mattingly's office in Great Falls. Brian Buckley, at the Lockwood office, was alerted and found the camera after a short search using a radiation survey meter. Buckley and an NRC on-site inspector verified that it was the one stolen by checking the serial number. There was no damage to the outer casing and the source was still locked inside. The Yellowstone County Sheriff's office said extensive press coverage of the theft and subsequent search may have caused the tipster to make his call. The caller did not attempt to claim the reward that had been offered.

The Department of Energy's Aerial Monitoring System, a specially equipped twin engine Cessna Citation, which flew into Billings on Tuesday to search for the camera from the air, will return to its base in Las Vegas later today. The aircraft was unable to conduct a search because of weather, but detailed plans were made to search likely areas in and around Billings.

 "The state of Montana and Yellowstone County Sheriff's deputies provided invaluable assistance at every step," said Ross Scarano, who directed search efforts for the NRC. "We're very happy that the camera has been found and that no one was harmed during this incident," Scarano said. "The NRC is grateful for the very professional assistance and cooperation from the State of Montana's Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Energy and the Sheriff."

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