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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC, ENGINEERING FIRM TO DISCUSS LOSS OF RADIOACTIVE SOURCE

The temporary loss of a radioactive source at a Delaware construction site in July will be the subject of a meeting between Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff and representatives of a Philadelphia, Pa., engineering firm on Wednesday, August 13. NRC staff believe Ambric Engineering Inc.'s loss of the source, which was used in a portable moisture-density gauge, was an apparent violation of agency regulations pertaining to the security of licensed radioactive materials in unrestricted areas.

On July 10, Ambric Engineering notified the NRC that a 6-millicurie, cesium-137 sealed source had been lost at a construction site at the Bally Meade Development on Route 92 in Claymont, Del. Contained in a small stainless steel capsule and measuring about a half-inch in length, the source had apparently broken off from the gauge. Four days later, the source was found, placed in a shielded container and shipped to its manufacturer.

An NRC inspection determined that Ambric Engineering did not control and maintain constant surveillance of the licensed material, which could have led to radioactive exposure for members of the public.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that the NRC has determined a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss the apparent violation, its cause and safety significance; to provide the licensee with an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the licensee to outline its proposed corrective action.

No decision on the apparent violation will be made at this conference. That decision will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

Scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. in the Division of Nuclear Materials Safety Conference Room at the NRC Region I office in King of Prussia, Pa., the predecisional enforcement conference will be open to the public for observation.

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