



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. 01-079

July 5, 2001

NRC ORDER HALTS SHIPMENT OF LARGE RADIOACTIVE SOURCES BY JL SHEPHERD & ASSOCIATES

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued an order, effective immediately, that essentially halts the shipment of large radioactive sources in certain packages by JL Shepherd & Associates, a manufacturer of industrial and research irradiators and instrument calibrators located in San Fernando, California.

The NRC action follows complaints from foreign authorities that Shepherd irradiators were not packaged for shipment in conformance with NRC regulations, which initiated an NRC inspection at the Shepherd facilities May 29-31. NRC inspectors identified several concerns with the manner in which the company conducted its approved quality assurance program, which is designed to assure safe design, use, maintenance, and repair of transportation packages for large radioactive sources. These deficiencies resulted in the shipment of packages that did not meet NRC requirements established to prevent them from breaking open should they be involved in a transportation accident. As a result, the order states that NRC officials “lack the requisite reasonable assurance that [Shepherd’s] current operations can be conducted . . . in compliance with the Commission’s requirements” and are protective of the health and safety of the public, including the [company’s] employees.

The order withdraws NRC approval of Shepherd’s quality assurance program. Without this approval, the company will not be allowed to package and ship large radioactive sources in certain packages. The company can continue to ship some smaller quantities of radioactive materials.

The irradiator involved in the shipment contained large quantities of highly radioactive materials, 18,000 curies of cobalt-60, which has the potential to cause serious injuries or death if the shielding is breached; however, no one was exposed to radiation as a result of an improperly packaged irradiator.

The company must, within 20 days, submit an answer to the order, either consenting to it or explaining why it should not have been issued. The company may also request a formal hearing to determine whether the order should be sustained.

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