



NRC NEWS

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CONTACT: Jan Strasma (630)829-9663/e-mail: rjs2@nrc.gov
Pam Alloway-Mueller (630)829-9662/e-mail: pla@nrc.gov

NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$3,000 FINE AGAINST A MISSOURI COMPANY FOR LOSS OF NUCLEAR GAUGE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$3,000 fine against SCI Engineering, Inc. of St. Charles, Missouri, for violating NRC requirements associated with the loss of a portable moisture density gauge containing two sealed radioactive sources.

The gauge, which is used to measure soil conditions at road and building sites, was later recovered. The gauge was not damaged in the incident and, consequently, there was no immediate health or safety concern.

On July 7, the company notified the NRC that a portable moisture density gauge had been stolen on July 6 along with the truck in which it had been stored. The gauge and truck were stolen from a residence in House Springs, Missouri, when the key to the truck was left in the vehicle's ignition. The keys to the gauge were attached to the key ring in the truck's ignition. The gauge was recovered after the truck later was involved in an accident.

The gauge contained 11 millicuries of cesium-137 and 44 millicuries of americium-241 in two sealed sources.

In notifying the company of the proposed fine, NRC Regional Administrator James E. Dyer noted that SCI Engineering, Inc. had taken corrective actions to prevent a reoccurrence of the situation including communicating with its staff regarding the importance of ignition key control and periodic checks of vehicle security. However, he said, a newly adopted enforcement policy provides that a fine be proposed to reflect the significance of the violation and emphasize the importance of maintaining control of licensed material. The specified fines included in the enforcement policy were developed to correspond to roughly three times the cost of proper disposal of a gauge.

SCI Engineering Inc. has 30 days to pay the fine or protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the company may request a hearing.

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