



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO MEET WITH WISCONSIN RAPIDS FIRM TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATION IN LOSS OF A GAUGE WITH RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Stora Enso North America of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, for a predecisional enforcement conference to discuss apparent violations of NRC regulations associated with the loss in December of a gauge containing a sealed radiation source.

The meeting will be at 1 p.m. Thursday, April 11, at the NRC's Regional Office at 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois. (Check in with the receptionist on the Second Floor.) The meeting is open to public observation. Before the meeting is adjourned, NRC officials will hear questions or comments from any members of the public in attendance.

The gauge, which contained a sealed capsule of radioactive cesium-137, was lost during dismantling of equipment and piping in the area where the gauge had been located. The equipment was sent to a paper mill in China.

A company representative traveled to China and on January 31 found the gauge still attached to a portion of the original piping. The gauge was locked in a secure, shielded position. As such, it would not have represented a safety hazard. The gauge was placed in a secure location until arrangements could be made to return it to Stora Enso's facility in Wisconsin Rapids.

An NRC inspection in January determined that the gauge had been removed by two subcontractor employees during the dismantling and inadvertently included in equipment which was sold to the Chinese paper mill.

The inspection identified three apparent violations of NRC safety requirements: (1) failure to control and maintain constant surveillance of radioactive material; (2) failure to clearly label the gauge as containing radioactive material; and (3) failure to ensure that the gauge was removed by persons licensed for such work.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that a determination has been made that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. The purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance, to provide the licensee with an opportunity to point out errors that may have been made in NRC inspection reports and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a civil penalty, will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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