



NRC NEWS

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NRC SENDS AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM TO REVIEW CIRCUMSTANCES RELATED TO RADIATION EXPOSURES AT TEXAS FIRM'S JOB SITE IN MONTANA

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Region IV office in Arlington, Texas, is looking into circumstances associated with an apparent radiation over-exposure of 31 workers at a Texas company's temporary well drilling site near Havre, Montana, in May of this year.

NRC officials said the radiation safety officer for Schlumberger Technology Corporation of Sugar Land, Texas, notified the agency on May 23 of the temporary loss of control of a radioactive well logging source containing 1.2 curies of Cesium-137. The company reported that a logging engineer failed to properly transfer the radioactive source from the well logging tool to its shielded transportation container following well logging operations at the Montana site on May 21. The source apparently fell from a handling tool onto the drilling rig floor where it remained unshielded until recovered by the company, some 48 hours later, on the evening of May 23. During that time, the portable rig was dismantled, moved to another drill site some five miles away, and reassembled.

Radioactive well logging sources are used by drilling companies to measure the properties of rock and other materials where a well is being dug to help determine the presence of water, gas or oil.

On August 30 the NRC was provided the results of tests which indicated that one of the exposed individuals may have received a higher exposure than originally estimated.

The NRC Region IV office conducted a special reactive inspection on May 25 and 26 and upgraded it to a special Augmented Inspection Team upon receipt of information on August 30 that the potential existed for several drill rig crew members to have received exposures greater than previously estimated. The AIT is reviewing the circumstances associated with the cause of the source being unshielded and unsecured.

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