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NRC STAFF PROPOSES $3,000 FINE AGAINST INDIANA FIRM FOR LOSING A FIXED GAUGE WITH RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a $3,000 fine against Alt & Witzig Engineering, Inc., Carmel, Indiana, for losing control of a portable moisture density gauge containing a sealed radiation source and not reporting the loss to the NRC immediately.

On May 2, a portable gauge fell from a pickup truck while being transported from a residence in Niles, Michigan, where it was stored overnight, to a temporary job site in LaPorte, Indiana. The worker had failed to adequately block and brace the gauge in the open bed of the truck and failed to close the tailgate on the truck properly. The gauge contained sealed radiation sources of cesium-137 and americium-241/beryllium.

A member of the public found the gauge along public highway Route 51 locked in its case with the radiation sources locked in the shielded positions and notified the local police department. As such, the gauge did not represent a safety hazard.

The NRC was not notified until almost eight hours after the loss was identified.

The NRC conducted an inspection into the circumstances of the incident in May-June and identified three violations of federal regulations: (1) failure to block and brace the gauge during transportation; (2) failure to immediately notify the NRC of the lost gauge; and (3) failure to store the gauge in an authorized location.

The company has until October 28 to either pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the company may request a hearing.

The letter notifying Alt & Witzig Engineering, Inc. of the proposed fine will be posted to the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/enforcement/actions/.

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