

No:I-13-021

May 6, 2013

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## **Nuclear Gauge Reported Missing in West Virginia; Recovery is Sought**

A Pennsylvania company has notified the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that a portable moisture-density gauge containing sealed sources of radioactive material is missing in West Virginia.

Valley Quarries Inc. of Chambersburg, Pa., reported that one of its employees was taking a reading with the Troxler Model 3430 gauge at a job site near Martinsburg, W.Va., last Friday morning. After completing the reading at about 10:40 a.m., the individual placed the gauge in the back of his pick-up truck and drove away, en route to another worksite.

Once he arrived, the gauge user realized the truck's rear gate had opened and the device was missing. Further, the gauge was not in its shipping container. The gauge user and a co-worker promptly drove back along the route just traveled but were unable to find the device.

Subsequently, the company's radiation safety officer stated that an employee of another firm reported seeing someone stop along the route to pick up and, then drive off with, what appeared to be the gauge.

The gauge contains approximately 8 millicuries of cesium-137 and 40 millicuries of americium-241. It is used to take measurements by projecting radiation from the two radioactive sources into the ground and then displaying the amount of radiation reflected back to the gauge.

There is a plunger-type handle protruding from the top of the gauge. This is used to extend and then retract a radioactive source from the shielded position. When not in use, the handle is normally locked, with the source in the retracted, safely shielded position. The rectangular base of the gauge is bright yellow.

As long as the sources are in the shielded position, the gauge would present no hazard to the public. However, any attempt to tamper with the radioactive sources in the device could subject the person trying to do so to be exposed to an unshielded radioactive source, which could result in potentially dangerous radiation exposure.

Anyone seeing the gauge should leave it alone and report its location to the NRC's Operations Center at 301-816-5100. The center is staffed 24 hours a day and accepts collect calls.

Also, Valley Quarries is offering a reward for the return of the gauge. The amount has not been specified. The company's radiation safety officer, John Englerth, can be reached at 717-729-1804.

Valley Quarries is licensed to use nuclear gauges by Pennsylvania, which is an NRC Agreement State. That means the state oversees nuclear material license-holders within its borders. However, the company was performing the work in West Virginia, which is not an Agreement State, under a reciprocity agreement with the NRC. Therefore, this situation is under the NRC's jurisdiction, though the agency is coordinating follow-up activities with Pennsylvania.

The West Virginia Radiological Health Program Office has been notified about the loss of the gauge.



A typical moisture-density gauge is shown above.