



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$5,500 FINE FOR GLOBAL X-RAY & TESTING CORP.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed a fine of \$5,500 against Global X-Ray & Testing Corp. for failing to operate radiography equipment in accordance with safety regulations. Global, based in Amelia, La., performs radiography work for off-shore pipe laying and other operations.

This enforcement action is the first resulting from a new NRC partnership with the U.S. Minerals Management Service, which provides NRC inspectors access to off-shore operations for the first time.

The company violated safety regulations in using a device called a "pipeliner" to inspect the welds joining sections of pipe being laid on the floor of the Gulf of Mexico to transport oil and gas from offshore production operations. Pipeliners contain a strong radioactive source that takes an X-ray-like picture of the welds being inspected to insure there are no flaws. The radioactive source, normally iridium-192, is exposed to the welds by a shutter operated by a knob on the pipeliner. NRC safety rules require that an extended handle be used to open and close the shutter to reduce the exposure of the operator's hand to radiation. An NRC inspector found that Global employees were not using an extension device when operating pipeliners. No radiation over-exposures to operators occurred because of the failure to follow safety regulations.

Global officers met with the NRC in Arlington, Texas, on February 8 to discuss circumstances surrounding this violation and others that were found during the NRC's inspection of Global's operations. Subsequently, the NRC determined that the problem was a level III violation on the NRC's four-level scale. A level I problem is the most severe. Level III violations carry a \$5,500 base civil penalty, subject to adjustment based on various factors. Of the three other violations found, one was a level III that resulted in no civil penalty, and the other two were level IV violations, which have no fine associated.

Global has corrected all the cited violations; however, the NRC may increase its inspections. The company has 30 days to pay the fine or protest it. If the protest is denied, the company may request a hearing by the NRC.

Copies of the Notice of Violation sent to Global X-ray and the NRC's inspection report can be found on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OE/rpr/ea00272.htm>.

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