



NRC NEWS

**U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION IV**

611 Ryan Plaza Drive - Suite 400
Arlington TX 76011-8064

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CONTACT: Breck Henderson

Phone: 817-860-8128

Cellular: 817-917-1227

e-mail: bwh@nrc.gov

NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$5,500 FINE FOR GULF COAST INTERNATIONAL INSPECTION, INC.

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed a fine of \$5,500 against Gulf Coast International Inspection, Inc. for violations of NRC safety regulations governing the conduct of radiography work in off-shore waters. Gulf Coast, based in Houma, La., performs radiography and other types of non-destructive testing for off-shore pipe laying and other operations.

One type of radiographic operation involves taking X-ray-like pictures of the welds in pipe being laid to carry oil and gas from off shore production operations. NRC inspectors found that company radiographers failed to post warning signs prior to conducting radiographic operations, failed to use a required personal safety device called an alarming ratemeter, failed to maintain constant surveillance of a radiographic exposure device, and failed to perform required exposure evaluations to assess radiation doses to themselves and the public.

Gulf Coast officers met with the NRC in Arlington, Texas, on February 9 to discuss circumstances surrounding the violations. Following that meeting, the NRC determined that the failure to post warning signs was a deliberate violation and judged it to be a level III violation on the NRC's four-level scale. Level I is the most serious violation. Level III violations carry a \$5,500 fine, unless there are mitigating circumstances. Of the remaining violations, one was a level III for which the fine was mitigated and the other three were level IV, which have no fine. No injuries to workers or the public resulted from the violations.

Since the inspection, Gulf Coast has taken steps to correct the causes of the violations, including remedial training for the radiographers involved. However, NRC Regional Administrator Ellis W. Merschoff said in a letter to Gulf Coast president Andre Olivier, that the fine is imposed "To emphasize the importance of strict compliance with radiation safety requirements associated with radiography operations . . ." 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 Gulf Coast International Inspection, Inc. can be found on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OE/rpr/ea00294.htm>.

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