



NRC NEWS

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NRC PROPOSES TO FINE NEW JERSEY HOSPITAL \$3,000 FOR VIOLATIONS OF NRC REQUIREMENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in Newark for two apparent violations of NRC requirements related to the loss of radioactive material. The NRC staff has proposed a \$3,000 civil penalty.

An NRC inspection was conducted in May and June after the hospital notified the agency it had lost a treatment ribbon containing nine seeds of iridium-192. Six of the ribbons had been implanted in a patient on May 23. Sometime prior to their removal on May 25, one of the ribbons was lost. It has not been found.

The NRC issued an inspection report on August 9, and offered the hospital the opportunity to address the apparent violations by either attending a pre-decisional enforcement conference or by responding in writing. The University of Medicine and Dentistry declined the conference, but did provide a written response. In it, the hospital staff said it believes the lost source may have inadvertently fallen into a toilet in the patient's room and been flushed into the sewer system. Neither the hospital's solid waste disposal system nor the landfill detected any radioactive material. The hospital also outlined the actions it had taken to prevent recurrence, which the NRC considered prompt and comprehensive.

NRC has cited the hospital for two violations: failing to control radioactive material which resulted in the loss of the material; and failing to perform a survey for radioactive material of trash and other items removed from the patient's room.

In a letter transmitting the Notice of Violation, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller said, "The safety significance of these violations was minimized by the fact that the source, whether discarded in the toilet or the trash, is unlikely to come into close contact with any individual." Nonetheless, he said, these violations are of concern to the NRC because the failure to control the material resulted in its loss and "such sources can result in substantial unintended radiation dose to an individual if placed in close contact with the individual's skin."

The hospital has 30 days to respond in writing to the Notice of Violation.

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