



NRC NEWS

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Office of Public Affairs

Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-001

E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

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NRC REQUESTS LICENSEES TO UPDATE NATIONAL DATABASE ON NUCLEAR MATERIAL HOLDINGS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is updating a national database on certain types of nuclear material and is requesting about 1,100 licensees to reverify the amounts of those materials currently in their possession.

The effort to update the Nuclear Materials Management and Safeguards System (NMMSS) stems from a report issued in October 2001 by the Department of Energy's Office of the Inspector General, which found that DOE could not fully account for government-owned materials and nuclear materials loaned or leased to domestic licensees based on information contained in the NMMSS database. The NRC believes an updated database will be a more useful and reliable tool for monitoring nuclear material holdings at licensee sites.

The NMMSS is the national database used by the NRC and the DOE to track certain nuclear materials and other government-owned materials. The database is maintained by a DOE contractor.

The NRC issued a bulletin (number 2003-04) October 8 notifying licensees about the agency's concerns regarding the database and requesting licensees to perform a one-time reporting of the material in their possession. The bulletin applies to approximately 1,100 licensees, including power reactors; research reactors; facilities involved in fuel fabrication, uranium enrichment or uranium conversion; spent fuel storage sites and educational institutions.

Materials covered by the bulletin include natural uranium, depleted uranium or thorium that were imported from foreign countries and that the United States has agreed to track; uranium enriched in the isotope U-235; Uranium-233; and plutonium. Licensees are also requested to report their holdings of government-owned deuterium, tritium, curium, americium, neptunium, californium, berkelium, or enriched lithium.

Licensees authorized to possess such materials are to report their precise holdings to the NMMSS by January 6, and preferably sooner. NMMSS staff will then compare that information to existing records. Any discrepancies that cannot be readily resolved will be referred to the NRC for further action.

The text of the bulletin is available on the NRC's web site at
<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/gen-comm/bulletins/2003/bl03004.pdf>.

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