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Contact: Maureen Conley, 301-415-8200

NRC Proposes \$42,000 Civil Penalty for Connecticut Company for Willful Import, Possession and Distribution Violations

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed a \$42,000 fine against Plus LLC of Stamford, Conn., for willful violations of requirements related to importing, possessing and distributing watches containing radioactive material.

The NRC found the company imported watches containing the radioactive isotope tritium and distributed them to unlicensed individuals in violation of the NRC's import, possession and distribution regulations. Tritium watches are exempt from regulation once they are initially distributed, so retailers and consumers do not need a license to own them; however, the initial distribution must be made under an NRC license to ensure that the devices meet safety requirements.

The watches contain a small amount of tritium encapsulated in glass vials. The radioactive material ionizes a luminescent coating on the inside of the glass vial to produce light, so that the markers on the watch face and hands can be seen in low light.

The company and the NRC held a pre-decisional enforcement conference March 14 to discuss the violations. The amount of the fine provides Plus LLC credit for taking corrective actions, which include ceasing distribution of the watches, and obtaining possession and exempt-distribution licenses from the NRC. But the amount is double the \$21,000 base fine because the company made a deliberate decision not to follow NRC requirements for economic benefit.

Plus LLC has the option to deny the violation, or to seek mediation under the NRC's alternative dispute resolution program. The company is not required to provide a written response to NRC's May 3 notice of violation.