

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road King of Prussia, PA 19406
Fax: 610/337-5241
Internet: dps@nrc.gov or nas@nrc.gov

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Contact: Diane Screnci (610/337-5330)
Neil A. Sheehan (610/337-5331)

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NRC TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS WITH HOWARD UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Howard University Hospital on Monday, September 13, to discuss several apparent violations of agency requirements. The apparent violations pertain to the handling and control of radioactive materials by the Washington, D.C., hospital.

The predecisional enforcement conference is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. in the Public Meeting Room at the NRC Region I office in King of Prussia, Pa. It will be open to the public for observation.

Three apparent violations were identified by NRC staff during a special inspection conducted at the hospital on July 27 and 28, and during a telephone interview on August 10. The inspection was performed to review the facility's procedures for receipt and control of NRC-licensed radioactive materials following several incidents over the last year.

On August 26, 1998, the hospital reported that a package containing 1.3 millicuries of iodine-131 was inadvertently discarded in the waste. This material was later recovered from a commercial waste-hauling facility, where it triggered radiation alarms and was identified to belong to Howard University. Then, on May 17 of this year, the hospital informed the NRC it did not receive a package holding 1.1 millicuries of iodine-131 that it expected to receive that day. This issue remains unresolved because the vendor had no proof the material was delivered to the hospital. Lastly, on July 13, the facility reported the loss of a package containing 2 millicuries of iodine-125.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that a determination has been made that violations have occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. The purpose is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee with an opportunity to point out errors that may have been made in NRC inspection reports; and to enable the licensee to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a civil penalty, will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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