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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC SENDS INSPECTORS TO PERMAGRAIN TO LOOK INTO  
CONTAMINATION EVENT

Two Nuclear Regulatory Commission inspectors are looking into the circumstances of a contamination event Monday at Permagrain Products, Inc., Karthaus, Pa.. The NRC was notified that day that a decommissioning contractor employee had been contaminated with radioactive strontium-90.

The worker was found to be contaminated during a routine "frisk" with a radiation detector when he was preparing to leave the radiologically controlled area. Further evaluation found several other employees were contaminated as well. All were decontaminated on site. Initial surveys indicate no radioactive material left the plant. Two employees are being checked for internal contamination.

The company has stopped all decommissioning activities and is performing a root cause analysis to determine the source of the contamination and the path it followed. The company also is decontaminating areas on the plant property outside the radiologically controlled area that were contaminated.

A report on the NRC inspection is expected to be issued in about 30 days. The building housed a research reactor and hot cells which were used for the examination of various irradiated materials as part of a research and development program until about 1960. Decommissioning has been underway since July 1998.

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