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NRC, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA TO DISCUSS
APPARENT VIOLATIONS IN HANDLING OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference Monday, December 15, with officials from the University of South Dakota, School of Medicine, to discuss apparent violations of NRC requirements for handling radioactive materials.

The conference will begin at 9 a.m. at the NRC Region IV office in Arlington, Texas. The meeting will be open to public observation; NRC officials will be available afterwards for questions.

USD's School of Medicine, in Vermillion, South Dakota, uses radioactive material in its teaching and research programs. Materials used are generally small quantities of radioactive tracers and sealed sources.

The NRC, during a periodic inspection of USD's radiation safety program completed on October 9, identified 10 apparent violations of NRC requirements. USD apparently has failed to: maintain sufficient control and security of radioactive materials, provide management oversight of the radiation safety program, hold radioactive material for the required period of time before disposal, and calibrate instruments used to measure radiation at the required frequency.

Additionally, USD has apparently failed to: conduct required inventories of radioactive sources, ensure that only the radiation safety officer ordered radioactive materials, notify workers of their annual doses, determine the potential dose to the public from exposure to radioactive material that through normal usage becomes airborne, provide radiation training for janitors and security guards, and conduct quarterly meetings between the radiation safety officer and the president of the university to review the radiation safety program.

Although there is no evidence that students or staff have been exposed to excess radiation doses because of these problems, NRC and USD officials will discuss at the conference corrective actions USD officials are planning to prevent safety problems in the future.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that NRC has made a final determination that violations did occur or that enforcement action, such as a

monetary fine, will be taken. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance, and to provide university officials with an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report and present corrective actions that have been taken.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later time.

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