

# *The RADical Chronicle*

Spring 1997

## **Introduction**

This information source is published by the Radiation Safety Staff and will be issued 4 times per year. It will include articles of interest, updates on regulations and policies, and our tentative inspection schedule and our inspection findings.

## **How to Contact Us**

On the back page you will find the names of our staff, their telephone numbers, e-mail address, and our fax number. We have organized our staff in two groups: the Permit Operations Section and the Health Physicists Section. The Permit Operations Section is responsible for data entry of permit requests, dosimetry, quarterly lab surveys, leak tests, inventory, purchase orders, x-ray surveys, and irradiator surveys. If you have questions regarding any of these areas, you should contact this section. The Health Physicists are responsible for permit review, inspections, and technical information. Each Health Physicist is responsible for specific agencies in addition to an ARS Area.

## **Emergency Information**

RSS has obtained a pager. An RSS Health Physicist can be contacted immediately in the event of an emergency by calling **(800) 759-8888**. An information notice was recently mailed out describing this service.

## **Radiation Safety Committee**

The Radiation Safety Committee is responsible for oversight of the USDA Radiation Safety Program. Each agency within USDA that uses radioactive material or radiation producing devices is represented by a qualified individual. The RSC meets each calendar quarter. **The next scheduled meeting is May 15, 1997.**

## **Recent Inspections**

(January-April 1997)

### ARS

Phoenix, AZ	Greenport, NY
Tucson, AZ	Ithaca, NY
Byron, GA	Woodward, OK
Dawson, GA	Chickasha, OK
Griffin, GA	
Tifton, GA	

### FS

Alturas, CA  
Eureka, CA  
Bend, OR  
Eugene, OR  
Roseburg, OR  
Lakeview, OR  
Eagle River, WI  
Madison, WI  
Rhineland, WI

### NRCS

Roswell, NM  
Pauls Valley, OK

### APHIS

Greenport, NY

## **Violations Noted During Recent Inspections**

- ▶ Failure to receive training at the required frequency
- ▶ Failure to report results of contamination surveys in units of Disintegration per Minute (DPM)
- ▶ Failure to perform contamination surveys at the required frequencies
- ▶ Using radioactive materials for an unapproved protocol
- ▶ Using radioactive material without receiving approval from RSS
- ▶ Failure to survey storage area monthly
- ▶ Copies of NRC license not kept with shipping papers for nuclear gauges

## **Inspection Schedule**

This is a list of tentative inspection trips planned for May through August. If your location appears on this list you will be contacted prior to the inspection.

### **ARS**

Fresno, CA  
Riverside, CA  
Salinas, CA  
Fargo, ND  
Brookings, SD  
Kerrville, TX  
Lubbock, TX  
Temple, TX  
Morris, MN  
Coshocton, OH

### **FS**

Deer River, MN  
Cass Lake, MN  
Grand Rapids, MN

## **RSC Audits**

Members of the Radiation Safety Committee also perform periodic audits of locations that use radioactive material. Below is a list of the locations that will be audited by committee members this year.

### **ARS**

Presidio, CA  
New Orleans, LA  
Sidney, MT  
Clay Center, NE  
Grand Forks, ND  
El Reno, OK  
Weslaco, TX  
Prosser, WA

### **AMS**

Gastonia, NC

### **NRCS**

Barbourville, KY  
Lexington, KY  
Centreville, MI  
Conrad, MT  
Tecumseh, NE  
Pierce, NE  
Casper, WY

### **NRCS**

Centreville, MI

### **FS**

Flagstaff, AZ

### **APHIS**

Mission, TX

## **Hazardous Material Spill**

On February 7, 1997, a transient man was found sleeping in the stairwell of a building in Lincoln, Nebraska holding three bottles of uranium oxyacetate dihydrate. The chemical had been stored in a basement storage area behind an 8-foot fence used by NRCS.

Emergency response and Health Department personnel responded. On Tuesday, February 11, 1997, the owner of the building discovered a broken bottle of the same chemical in the basement. Police cordoned off the area and authorities spent 3 hours examining the spill. During this time, 20-30 people were not allowed to enter or leave the building. This chemical is radioactive but because uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive material it is not regulated by the NRC and can be purchased without a license from chemical manufacturers. The NRCS arranged with a chemical disposal broker to dispose of the material. The NRCS estimates that this chemical could have been stored in this building from the 1950s. The lesson to be learned is to dispose of old chemicals.

## **Quarterly Surveys**

A recent audit of the quarterly surveys for 1996 resulted in several violations for permit holders. Survey requirements include:

- ▶ Results must be in units of DPM
- ▶ A radiation level survey (using a portable survey meter), is required for all isotopes except tritium (H-3)
- ▶ Storage areas, including waste storage areas, must be surveyed monthly even if no experiments are performed during the quarter
- ▶ Surveys that are not submitted to RSS within 60 days of request will be referred to the Radiation Safety Committee for enforcement action

### **ARS Safety Conference**

The ARS Safety, Health, and Environmental Conference is scheduled for June 9-13, 1997 in Fort Collins, Colorado. Jack Patterson RSS will give a presentation on Radiation Safety at the conference.

### **FEMA Exercise**

Jack Patterson will be participating in an exercise conducted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) during the week of May 19-23 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This exercise will simulate a large release of radioactive to a large area. This exercise provides participants with "hand-on" experience with a nuclear disaster. Because the scenario involves radiation exposure to agriculture products, RSS is asked to participate in these exercises.

### **OIG Audits Radiation Safety Program**

The Office of the Inspector General has been performing an audit of the USDA's Radiation Safety Program. The audit began on January 27. Three inspectors have been auditing RSS records and recently inspected the ARS Beltsville location. The inspectors plan to visit other USDA sites that use radioactive material. Locations are given 3 days notice prior to the inspection.

### **Radiation Safety Handbook Updates**

Soon you will be receiving updated pages for the Radiation Safety Handbook. Periodically we will send information to replace pages in the Handbook as regulations and policies change.

### **LRPO Training**

LRPO training will be offered at the Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas this summer. Dates for the training have not been finalized. The training will be for one week. All LRPOs should plan to attend.

### **Organizational Chart**

On the next page you will find an organization chart for our office.

### **Questions**

The next issue will include a section for commonly asked questions. If you have a question you would like to see answered, please write to us. Our address is:

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## How to Reach Us

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