

Radical Chronicle

RSS Information Notice

Summer 2000

Inspections Performed

(June-August)

APHIS

Fort Collins, CO

ARS

Tifton, GA
Miles City, MT
Sidney, MT
Fargo, ND
Mandan, ND
College Station, TX
Kearneysville, WV

FS

Cass Lake, MN
Grand Rapids, MN
Eagle River, WI
Madison, WI
Rhineland, WI

FSIS

Athens, GA
St. Louis, MO

NRCS

Carthage, MO
Dexter, MO
Cookeville, TN

Tentative Inspection Schedule

(September-October)

APHIS

Otis Air National Guard Base, MA

ARS

Beltsville, MD
Kerville, TX
Lubbock, TX
Temple, TX
Pullman, WA
Prosser, WA
Beaver, WV

FS

Moscow, ID
Colville, WA

NRCS

Lexington, KY
Roswell, NM
Jackson, TN
Temple, TX
Christiansburg, WV

Inspection Findings

Eighteen locations were inspected between June and August. Only 3 violations that are listed below were cited as a result of these inspections. Locations with no violations are commended for their efforts to comply with NRC regulations and USDA radiation safety policies.

- ; **Failure to perform leak tests.** *Sealed sources are required to be leak tested every 6 months.*
- ; **Failure to maintain leak test records for a period of 3 years.** *Results of the leak tests must be maintained for a period of 3 years.*
- ; **Failure to perform surveys for radioactive contamination.** *Surveys are required to be performed for radioactive contamination on a monthly or weekly frequency where radioactive materials are used or stored.*

Dosimetry

Please contact Katina Jones at (301) 504-2444 or kjones@rss.usda.gov if you have not received your new dosimeters from Proxtronic, Inc.

New Chairperson for Radiation Safety Committee

The Radiation Safety Committee recently elected a new chairperson. Dr. Ronald Korcak is the Associate Area Director for the Beltsville Area of the Agricultural Research Service.

Incidents Involving Electron Capture Detectors

Electron capture detectors (ECD) are devices that contain a radioactive source. These sources are usually nickel-63 or tritium. The amount of activity varies between 8 and 15 millicuries for Ni-63 sources and between 100-300 millicuries for tritium sources. The devices are generally installed in gas chromatographs and are used for sample analysis. In some cases, the ECDs have been removed from the gas chromatographs either because the gas chromatograph is no longer used or it has been disposed of. All ECDs must be tracked by the RSS and must be leak tested every 6 months.

There have been two recent incidents involving these ECDs. One ECD was discovered during a location decommissioning. During the move the person responsible for the property transfer found a gas chromatograph that contained a nickel-63 detector. This ECD had never been included on RSS' sealed source inventory records and had not been leak tested during the period of time it was at the location. The unit was leak tested by RSS and transferred to the University of Miami.

Another ECD was discovered when personnel at another location were cleaning out a closet. The Safety Specialist at the location contacted RSS. The location had previously submitted documents to RSS indicating that the gas chromatograph containing this source was transferred to the University of Florida. It was determined that the gas chromatograph was transferred to the university however, the ECD was removed prior to the transfer.

These incidents emphasize the importance of identifying and tracking these types of sealed sources.

Gas chromatographs containing these detectors can be purchased without a radioactive material license however, if a organization HAS a radioactive material license(USDA has an NRC license)then the detectors are required to be inventoried every 6 months.

Not all gas chromatographs contain ECDs. The ECDs should be clearly marked with a "Caution Radioactive Material" label or etching.



Need a Liquid Scintillation Counter?

The Forest Service' North Central Experiment Station in Grand Rapids, Minnesota has a liquid scintillation counter on surplus. The counter is a Packard 2500 TR. If you are interested in this counter call Dale Nichols at 218-326-7115 for more information.

LRPO/Irradiator Training

Spaces in the combined LRPO and Irradiator training course are rapidly filling up. Please submit your reservation form soon. The reservation form is available on our website at www.usda.gov/da/shmd/train.htm.

The course starts at 6pm Sunday, October 22nd and ends at noon on Friday October 27th so the attendees can make Friday departure arrangements. The course was shortened to accommodate the crowd expected at the Texas A&M home football game on Saturday, October 28.

If you have any questions, contact Jack Patterson at 301-504-2445 or jack.patterson@usda.gov.

Decay-In-Storage Waste

The USDA's NRC license authorizes disposal of waste by decay-in-storage for isotopes with physical half-lives of 120 days or less.

Certain requirements must be met as a condition of this license. Waste that is stored for decay must be stored for a **minimum of 10 half-lives**.

All waste must be labeled with the isotope, activity, and date it was put into storage.

After 10 half-lives, the waste must be surveyed to ensure that radiation levels cannot be distinguished from background radiation levels. All radioactive labels must be removed or defaced prior to disposing of this waste as ordinary trash.

This disposal must be documented in writing. The following information must be recorded:

1) the name of the individual performing the survey; 2) the dose rate measured at the survey of the waste container; 3) the background dose rate; 4) the instrument used to perform the survey; 5) the date of the disposal; and 6) the date that the radioactive material was placed in storage.

These records must be retained for a period of 3 years.

If you have questions regarding this method of disposal, contact your Agency/ARS Location health physicist.



Frequently Asked Questions

How often does my permit need to be renewed? Do I have to send in a new application if nothing has changed since I first applied?

A permit must be renewed every 5 years. A complete application must be submitted every 5 years regardless of whether or not there have been any changes in research, associate users, rooms, etc.

Do I have to notify RSS if I don't plan to renew my permit to use radioactive material?

Yes. You must notify RSS in writing, stating that you want to terminate your permit. You must then provide close-out surveys of all rooms listed on your permit and disposal forms for all radioactive material/sources in your inventory (if applicable).

Do I have to list a room I use for counting my samples or storing my waste if the room is listed on another person's permit?

Yes. All rooms where a permit holder (or their associate user) uses radioactive materials must be listed on the permit. It does not matter whether another permit holder performs the surveys for that room, you must have the room listed on your permit to be authorized to use radioactive material in that room.

Do I have to contact RSS if I am sending a nuclear gauge to the manufacturer for repair or calibration?

Yes. All transfers of radioactive material must be approved by RSS.

Director

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Health Physicists

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