

Energy Department Fines Mound Contractors for Safety Violations

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WASHINGTON, DC The Department of Energy (DOE) has issued a \$137,500 civil penalty to BWX Technologies of Ohio, Inc. (BWXTO), operator of the Mound site in Miamisburg, Ohio for a series of procedural nuclear safety violations.

The Preliminary Notice of Violation was issued by the DOE Office of Price Anderson Enforcement, and, consistent with the enforcement program's mission, focused on activities that could serve as precursors to more serious incidents. The Preliminary Notice of Violation consists of four parts:

- Violations associated with a January 25, 2001, event when a worker accidentally inhaled plutonium and plutonium contamination spread into a room. While the worker's intake was low, it was caused by multiple procedural breakdowns. DOE cites several radiological work control deficiencies, such as inadequate work planning, hazard evaluation, and hazard control;>
- BWXTO's failure to properly review and test changes in the computer software meant to ensure timely turn-around time for analyzing bioassay samples. As a result, analysis of 33 samples was delayed by up to 16 days. The sample tracking problem is the latest in a series of bioassay problems at the Mound site, and effective corrective actions from the previous Notice of Violation could have prevented these problems;
- Radiological Work Permits that did not require that workers be tested for exposure to a full range of potential exposure hazards. As a result, workers were not fully monitored. These violations were identified and promptly corrected and reported by BWXTO workers; and
- Multiple failures to comply with safety-review procedures used to evaluate the potential effect of proposed changes in nuclear facilities. DOE has cited similar violations in the past, and found continued problems in this area.

The Office of Price-Anderson Enforcement provides incentives in the form of reduced civil penalties to contractors who identify problems early and take effective and prompt action to fix them. In this case, the potential fine of \$275,000 was reduced to \$137,500 in light of the self-identification by BWXTO of certain of the violations and the comprehensive corrective actions now being taken by BWXTO.

The corrective actions are already underway and include expanded training on hazards evaluation and work control requirements, revising methods and using an automated tool to establish bioassay sampling requirements for proposed activities. BWXTO is also revising procedures and training workers on testing software changes, and enhancing qualification requirements and training for safety reviews.

This action follows an October 1997 civil penalty of \$112,500 issued to the previous contractor at Mound and a November 1998 civil penalty of \$165,000 issued to the BWXTO for similar problems.

The Price-Anderson Amendments Act of 1988 requires DOE to undertake regulatory enforcement actions against contractors for violations of DOE's nuclear safety requirement. Additional details can be found on the Internet at <http://www.eh.doe.gov/enforce>.

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