



NRC NEWS

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NRC APPROVES FINAL RULE ON NATIONAL SOURCE TRACKING SYSTEM FOR RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS OF CONCERN

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved a final rule implementing a National Source Tracking System (NSTS) to enhance controls for certain radioactive materials used in industry, academia and medicine.

The tracking system has been developed through close cooperation with other federal and state agencies as part of the NRC's efforts to enhance controls over radioactive materials following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The final rule closely follows recommendations of a joint NRC-Department of Energy report on radiological dispersion devices (RDDs, or "dirty bombs") published in May 2003 and is based upon an interim database of radiological sources initiated in 2004 and currently in use by the NRC. The rule also implements provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

The final rule, to be published shortly in the *Federal Register*, will require licensees to report to the NSTS the manufacture, transfer, receipt, disassembly, and disposal of nationally tracked sources. Basic information to be collected will include the manufacturer, model number, serial number, radioactive material, activity and manufacture date of each source. Information on the facilities involved in any transaction will also be included.

"The National Source Tracking System will be an important component of the NRC's broad and comprehensive effort to enhance the control of radioactive material and prevent its use by our adversaries," NRC Chairman Dale E. Klein said. "This system is appropriate for a post-9/11 environment and consistent with recommendations of the international community, other federal agencies and the Congress."

The NSTS will apply to radioactive sources that fall in Category 1 or Category 2 of the International Atomic Energy Agency's "Code of Conduct for the Safety and Security of Radioactive Materials." There are an estimated 44,000 sources in these categories (considered to be of the greatest concern from a security standpoint) in approximately 16,000 devices in use in the United States. They are typically used in devices such as irradiators, radiography cameras, well-logging devices, Gamma Knife[®] surgical devices, and radioisotope thermoelectric generators, among others.

Licensees will be required to report their inventories and transactions regarding Category 1 sources by Nov. 15, 2007, and of Category 2 sources by Nov. 30, 2007. Inventories must be updated and reconciled annually with information in the database.

Once fully operational, the NSTS will enhance the accountability of radioactive sources by helping the NRC and Agreement States (the 34 states that have been given authority by the NRC to regulate the medical, industrial and academic uses of radioactive material) conduct inspections and investigations, communicate nationally tracked source information to other government agencies, and verify legitimate ownership and use of nationally tracked sources.

Radioactive materials provide critical capabilities in the oil and gas, electrical power, construction and food industries; are used to treat millions of patients each year in diagnostic and therapeutic medical procedures; and are used in technology research and development. In developing its requirements, the NRC aims to provide appropriate safety and security for the materials without discouraging their beneficial use.

A proposed rule on the NSTS was published July 28, 2005, in the *Federal Register*. The agency received 33 comment letters on the proposed rule. In addition, the NRC held public meetings in Rockville, Md., and Houston, Texas, to explain the proposed rule and solicit comment. An additional 17 individuals provided comments at these meetings. The NRC's responses to the comments are included in the upcoming *Federal Register* notice.

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