

Former Energy Department Contractor Fined For Failing To Monitor Workers' Health

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WASHINGTON, DC The Department of Energy today announced a \$112,500 civil penalty against EG&G Incorporated, Wellesley, Massachusetts, the former operator of the Mound Site near Miamisburg, Ohio, for violation of nuclear safety rules. The contractor failed to adequately monitor and accurately calculate radioactive contamination of workers. This is the largest penalty imposed by the department since the Price-Anderson enforcement program took effect two years ago.

"This is a serious violation of health and safety rules. Our ability to protect workers from potential health risks from radiation exposure relies on accurate monitoring," said Peter N. Brush, Acting Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health. "We expect the new contractor to fix these problems. There is simply no excuse for not fully monitoring workers' health."

Analysis of periodic "bioassay" or urine samples assures workers' exposure does not exceed annual dose limits. Workers who approach these limits are normally restricted from further radiological work that may compromise their health.

Earlier this year the Department of Energy reduced EG&G's award fee by more than \$300,000 for problems related to this bioassay monitoring program.

The total penalty is based on violations falling into two categories. First, approximately, 108 cases were discovered in which bioassay samples were not submitted in 1997 alone, as required by Radiation Work Permits. While EG&G identified this problem in a February 1996 self assessment, the contractor did not take steps to resolve the problems.

The Energy Department determined that such violations constituted a Severity Level I problem, the first time the department has cited a contractor for the most serious type of infraction. Although EG&G supervisory personnel were aware of the problem the violations continued to persist over an extended period.

Second, the Energy Department cited the contractor's failure to properly calculate worker exposures based on the bioassay samples. As a result the potential exists that some workers received positive test results reflecting doses of plutonium 238, but these doses were recorded as zero. The worst case dose expected when the calculations are revised is well below the department's annual limit. The full base civil penalty was

assessed in each case because the department determined that the contractor did not identify, report or correct problems in a timely manner.

EG&G's contract expired on September 30, 1997. The current site operator is Babcock and Wilcox Ohio, who will be responsible for implementing actions to correct the bioassay program.

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