

Atomic Energy Regulatory Board

PRESS RELEASE

Incident of Radioactive Material discovered in scrap Dealers shops in New Delhi.

Mumbai, April 10, 2010: This statement is issued to clarify and address certain issues arising in the wake of the recent incident of radioactive material discovered in scrap dealers' shops in Mayapuri, New Delhi. This incident unfolded when AERB received a report from a hospital in New Delhi about a patient, a Mayapuri scrap metal dealer with suspected radiation-induced symptoms. Two AERB officers were promptly sent to the site who identified the location of the radiation. As an immediate measure they provided shielding by covering the identified high-radiation locations with metal sheets to reduce the radiation levels. The designated emergency response agencies of DAE were notified, who swung into action as per procedures and in an overnight operation on April 8, 2010 they were successful in locating and securing the radioactive pieces safely into shielded containers. As a result, by forenoon of April 09, the area was rendered safe and radiation levels were confirmed to be at natural background levels. The doses received by the experts and workers who performed the recovery operation were monitored and found to be within specified limits. AERB representatives were present at site during the entire operation.

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Investigations are now in progress to ascertain the source of Cobalt-60 (Co-60) pieces which were the cause of the radiation. Co-60 is used in industrial applications such as industrial radiography cameras, nucleonic gauges for thickness measurement and in well-logging operations, and in medical equipment (e.g. blood irradiators and radiotherapy units)

Facilities and equipment that use Co-60 are required to be individually licensed / authorized by AERB. Furthermore, replacement of Co-60 in these facilities / equipment needs AERB consent, which is granted on the basis that the used Co-60 is returned safely to its original supplier. In India, Co-60 is supplied by BRIT (Board of Radiation and Isotope Technology), and is also imported, under strict licensing process. Production of Co-60 is a highly specialized process involving large facilities having nuclear reactors.

The on-going investigations to identify the source of the Co-60 pieces may help the Police in finding out the route through which they came into the metal scrap market. Other follow-up actions include screening individuals who could have received radiation and their medical management; learning from the experience to further fine-tune the emergency response preparedness in such situations and deployment of radiation monitoring equipment in several vulnerable locations to avoid such incidents.



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