

Hospitals must surrender radium to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre

Nuclear Plants have nothing of the security problems that exist in the non-power nuclear sector

ZeeNews
August 6, 2006

It has been found that a few hospitals and other users have still not surrendered radium, the most hazardous radioactive source, to the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), even 18 years after Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) issued a directive to this effect, former senior AERB official has said.

Those who did not surrender radium (once used in cancer therapy) seem to be exposing themselves and other unsuspecting persons to potential radiation risks. It is important that those who possess radium now should immediately surrender it to the BARC through AERB, former Secretary AERB K S Parthasarathy told today.

A family in Kolkata in 2003 sought and obtained help from AERB to dispose off their "inherited" radium stock. They realized that it was risky to keep radium (although they kept it with adequate protection), Parthasarathy said adding, many more such cases could be there in the country and they all should come forward to surrender.

Extensive study of radium dial painters showed that retention of a microgram (one millionth of a gram) of radium in the human body caused harmful effects such as cancer. Radium was the most hazardous radioactive source used in medicine.

AERB had directed its withdrawal and replacement with safer substitute in 1988, taking into account its proven toxicity and the deplorable safety status in hospitals handling radium.