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RCP INFORMATION NOTICE 2016-02:

**TITLE: REPORTING SOURCES OF
RADIATION DISCOVERED
IN TRASH AND SCRAP
WASTE COLLECTIONS**

ADDRESSEES

All active landfills, transfer stations, trash handling and combustion facilities, and scrap metal recycling facilities in Massachusetts.

INTENT

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Radiation Control Program (RCP) is issuing this information notice (IN) to provide awareness of the requirement to report sources of radiation discovered in trash and scrap collections immediately to the RCP.

BACKGROUND

Massachusetts regulation 105 CMR 120.012 (B) reads "Any person who finds or detects any source of radiation that is not under the physical or administrative control of a licensee or registrant, and that is not excluded, exempted or otherwise authorized under the provisions of 105 CMR 120.000, shall immediately report such source to the Radiation Control Program."

The vast majority of these sources of radiation are discovered during residential and commercial waste and scrap collections and recycling efforts. Over the past ten years, RCP has received approximately 100 notifications of these discoveries annually.

SUMMARY OF ISSUE

A large percentage of discovered sources of radiation reported to RCP are determined to be items contaminated by individual members of the public who had recently been administered radioactive material as part of a diagnostic or therapeutic medical procedure and the subject items are inadvertently disposed later along with normal household trash. In these cases, the radioactive contamination involved is usually a trace amount of material that is short-lived so that it will radioactively decay to background levels within a range of a few days to a few months.

A small percentage of reported situations involve discreet sources of radiation that present a higher public safety concern related to higher radiation levels and material that is much longer lived (radioactive half-life decay measured in years). These situations usually involve manufactured items, devices, instruments, or components of larger pieces of equipment. These objects contain radioactive material in amounts intended for scientific, industrial or commercial use and not meant to be accessible to the general public.

For reasons of public safety, all discovered sources of radiation, as defined in 105 CMR 120.012 (B), shall be immediately reported to RCP (Monday through Friday, 9AM-5PM, 617-242-3035; or 24-hour emergency line 617-242-3453). Callers during normal office hours will be forwarded to a professional staff member who will gather information and assist in determining future course of action. Actions will include (1) deciding whether to transport the material to another location or keep the material in a safe and secure location on-site, (2) obtaining the services of a radiation safety professional who can determine radiation levels and specific radioisotope involved, and (3) once the material is surveyed and identified, determining safe methods of holding in secure storage until the material has radioactively decayed to background level or determining the most appropriate method of transferring the material to a long-term disposal facility.

This IN requires no specific action or written response. If you have questions about the information in this notice, please contact the Technical Contact listed below.

Sincerely,

John M. Priest, Jr., Director
Massachusetts Radiation Control Program

Technical Contact:

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