



National Aeronautics and
Space Administration

SA-02-04



Langley Research Center Safety Alert

Date: May 17, 2004

TO: All Langley Employees

FROM: 429/Head, Safety and Facility Assurance Office, OSSEMA

SUBJECT: Legacy Radioactive Materials

Recently an aircraft instrument from the 1940's, painted with radium paint, was discovered in a display case on the Center. Historically, many commercial products contained or were treated with radioactive materials. Other items may also contain radioactive materials including: compasses, clocks and other timepieces, self-illuminating exit signs, materials with glow in the dark coatings, and laboratory instruments requiring a source of radiation. While these items do not pose a threat to employee health or safety when intact, they have the potential to release contamination if damaged and require proper disposal methods.

Some articles may be marked as radioactive, have the three-bladed radiation symbol, or have a statement referencing the Atomic Energy Commission or Nuclear Regulatory Commission. However, some items may not contain any markings. For articles that glow in the dark, an indicator that they may contain radioactive material is if they glow without having to be "charged up" with visible light or if the glow does not diminish during use. It is important to note that nearly all glow in the dark items sold today utilize photo fluorescent techniques, which do not require radioactive materials.

Personnel who suspect that they have or know the location of such items on Center should contact the LaRC Radiation Safety Officer, Kim Merritt, at 43210. He will evaluate the item for radioactivity and if found to be radioactive determine, in conjunction with the owner, what the appropriate disposition of the item should be.

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(This Safety Alert to be posted on Facility Bulletin Boards for a Minimum of 30 days.)