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## **NEW TECHNOLOGIES HAVE POTENTIAL TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE USE OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS**

BOSTON – Two leading manufacturers of product measurement and quality control equipment – EGS Gauging Inc. of Billerica, Massachusetts, and NDC Infrared Engineering, Inc. of Irwindale, California – have been awarded funding by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to develop new technologies that reduce industry’s reliance on radioactive isotopes. Under an EPA grant, the Product Stewardship Institute, Inc. (PSI) assisted the agency in initiating this project and soliciting proposals, and will help gain acceptance in the marketplace for the technologies through multi-stakeholder involvement.

“Achieving acceptance and use of non-radioactive devices is an important step toward a sustainable economy,” said Scott Cassel, Executive Director of the Product Stewardship Institute. “These two companies are demonstrating how others in this industry can take greater responsibility for the products they make, distribute, or sell.”

Many gauges and sensors in use today use small amounts of radioactive materials to measure parameters such as density, thickness, and moisture content in a wide variety of industrial manufacturing applications. While the radioactive materials are safely sealed inside the devices and present little danger to users or the general public, they can cause environmental contamination and health risks if damaged or improperly disassembled or disposed.

The goal of the projects is to reduce or eliminate the use of radioactive isotopes in two common industrial applications, and ultimately reduce the potential for improper disposal of radioactive devices. Each project will compare the effectiveness of the particular alternative technology against existing equipment. The companies will also explore the benefits of these environmentally superior products, including reduced health and environmental risk, and

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financial savings from reduced regulatory costs associated with training, use, storage, monitoring, and disposal of radioactive materials.

Of particular concern is the potential for these devices to be included in the metal recycling debris generated from the demolition or major renovation of industrial facilities. There are federal and state requirements to properly dispose of these nuclear devices through a firm licensed to manage radioactive materials. But new owners or demolition companies may be unaware that devices containing radiological material exist at a site, or be reluctant to locate and dismantle the devices. As a result, the radiation emitting device in the recycling stream may cause the load to be rejected at the recycler or, if initially undetected, contaminate the steel during the recycling process resulting in millions of dollars in cleanup costs and lost production time.

EPA's Office of Radiation and Indoor Air awarded EGS Gauging, Inc. approximately \$75,000 to demonstrate that the company's non-nuclear True Caliper measurement using optical and magnetic technology can replace radioactive devices used to measure the thickness and density of various paper, film, and plastic sheets.

"We are very excited to have been awarded this funding which will allow EGS to replace hundreds of radioactive gamma gauges in use throughout North America," said John Sharood, President of EGS Gauging, INC.

EPA also awarded approximately \$150,000 to NDC Infrared Engineering to conduct research and development on an x-ray technology that has potential to replace devices that use gamma and beta radiation in the plastics, pulp, and paper industries.

"NDC has been driving toward the goal of reduced activity nuclear gauges and / or non-nuclear alternatives since we introduced the first lower activity beta gauges back in 1994," said Hector Marchand, Vice President of Marketing for NDC. "Subsequently, all of our gauging developments, including Laser, Infrared and X-Ray devices, have been non-nuclear in nature. This grant allows us to take the next logical step in developing additional high performance non-nuclear gauging alternatives."

The EPA will manage the 18-month demonstration and research projects, while PSI will integrate stakeholder input pertaining to the technical and financial feasibility of these alternative gauge technologies. PSI will also identify barriers to market acceptance of the new technologies, and recommend strategies for greater use.

*The Product Stewardship Institute, Inc. ([www.productstewardship.us](http://www.productstewardship.us)) is a national non-profit organization located in Boston, Massachusetts, which employs a multi-stakeholder process to solve waste management problems and foster product design changes. PSI is working with stakeholders to develop product stewardship agreements to reduce the health and environmental impacts from radioactive devices, electronics, paint, mercury switch thermostats, pharmaceuticals, propane gas cylinders, and tires.*

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