

# Feds probe radiation leaks at X-ray firm

By MARY GNIEWEK  
The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has suspended the license of a Farmington Hills X-ray company, saying it may have exposed employees of adjoining businesses to more than acceptable levels of radiation over a 2½ year period.

American X-Ray and Inspection, Inc., 24030 Haggerty Rd., was cited by the NRC Feb. 28 with three alleged violations:  
• The company didn't make an adequate survey of the area around the facility where they were doing industrial radiography work from February 1977 through July 1979.  
• It did not control access to areas where radiation levels were above NRC limits two millirems an hour (REM) for radiation exposure to the public.  
• American X-Ray in 1979 transferred its license to Gorsira X-Ray, Inc., operating at the same address, contrary to NRC regulations.  
NRC spokesman Jan Strasma said the investigation is still underway to determine if employees in two or three

businesses which share a common wall with the garage where the radiation work was done were exposed to excessive radiation levels.  
Industrial radiography involves using radiation to make X-rays of heavy metal objects like pipes, beams or other structural pieces to determine flaws and test adequacy levels.  
At least a dozen Michigan firms do radiography work, but Strasma, a regional NRC officer in Chicago, regards the situation in Farmington Hills as "very unusual and very serious."  
"It appears at some points the levels

may have been above the limit," he said.  
He could not estimate the number of employees involved or speculate on the measures of exposure.  
THE COMPANY is located in the Farmington Industrial Center, south of 10 Mile Road and west of the Farmington Industrial Park. It houses about a dozen businesses.  
Overexposure to radiation can increase the potential for cell damage and cancer, according to Donald VanFarow, chief division officer for radiological health at the Michigan Department of Health.  
The NRC initiated the probe of American X-Ray after a former employee alleged improprieties were occurring at the company. Investigators periodically conducted exams within the garage area and completed work Jan. 28.

A COMPANY SPOKESWOMAN said the X-ray firm received the NRC order Tuesday. American X-Ray has 25 days to show cause why its license shouldn't be revoked.  
In addition, Gorsira X-Ray was ordered to cease use of its radiography equipment and return any radioactive material in its possession to an authorized agent within 25 days.  
"We prefer to have a well thought out response to the charges," said Michael Freud, attorney for Gorsira X-Ray.  
"The NRC released the information prior to our notification. We're in the process of reviewing the charges so we can reply intelligently."  
Freud said a press release will be issued today.

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## Internal rift stalls commission choices

By STEVE BARNABY  
Farmington editor  
A political struggle among members of the Farmington Hills Council has led to an impasse on appointments to that city's planning commission.  
Mayor Joann Soronen has refused to appoint Joseph Hovanesian, a resident who has the support of four councilmen. Hovanesian is the husband of Julieann Hovanesian, who led the Citizens for More Responsible Government (CMRG), a group opposed to the now defunct senior citizen/low income housing on Freedom and Drake Road.  
To counter, the council majority has refused to affirm the reappointments of planning commissioners Judy Guertin and Ed Raedle.  
Under the city charter only the mayor or can recommend commission appointments. The council only can affirm or reject her appointments. Council members aren't allowed to nominate potential commissioners.

Those supporting the Hovanesian appointment are Joe Alkateeb, Jack Burwell, William Lange and Donn Wolf.  
Mrs. Hovanesian's group supported the election of Burwell, Lange and Wolf.  
But those councilmen deny that their campaign to have Hovanesian appointed is a political payback for CMRG support during the election.  
"THERE WERE no promises made. None whatsoever," said Wolf.  
Wolf lauded Hovanesian, saying he is the best qualified of those who have applied for the third seat on the commission. Hovanesian is a professor at Oakland University.  
"I think he is well qualified. He will add new insight and thought to the commission. He is the kind of guy who can bring two opposing views together."  
The three terms expired at the beginning of the year. The one seat became

vacant after one of the commissioners resigned. Although the remaining two have yet to be reappointed, under the charter they remain members of the commission.  
Mayor Soronen has taken a low-key approach in the conflict, refusing to bring the appointments to the council table and working behind the scenes to resolve the conflict.  
"I feel confident that we can resolve this within the next month," she said.  
The mayor claims a good relationship with the council majority and said they are easy to work with.  
But other council members uninvolved in the conflict say that private discussions have been heated. At one point, according to one council member, the majority threatened to remove Mrs. Soronen as mayor if she didn't abide by their wishes.  
But Wolf denied that such tactics have been used.  
"I DON'T know of any threat to the mayor. I have heard that rumor, too. But I think this problem can be resolved," he said.  
The mayor serves at the pleasure of the council for a one-year term. Theoretically, a council majority could remove a mayor if they so wished. That has never happened in Farmington Hills.  
Mrs. Soronen has her eye on other community members to appoint to the commission's third seat. One is Robert Andover, a long-time Soronen supporter and an active member of the Council of Homeowners of Farmington Hills.  
The next opportunity Mrs. Soronen would have to make the appointments would be at the March 10 meeting.



**Our Unsung Hero**  
Farmington Observer readers overwhelmed us with nominations for our Unsung Hero Award. The story of your nominees and our story "Meet Fred Ehlers" is in this edition of Suburban Life. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Leaky mains tamed

By MARY GNIEWEK  
The City of Farmington plans to recover almost \$30,000 a year in water savings by eliminating leaks and fixing malfunctioning meters which wasted 279,000 gallons of water a day.  
City Manager Robert Deadman revealed the results of his water survey studies this week. He said the city has had six months to test the results, which prove accurate.  
In a 14-week study completed by Pitometer Associates of New York, the city was divided into several districts for the purpose of measuring water use to locate underground leaks of mains and service.  
The largest leak was discovered at Power and Grand River with a loss of 84,000 gallons a day.  
The amount of funds the city hopes to recoup is based on the current cost from the Detroit system of \$2.26 per thousand cubic feet of water.  
According to Pitometer, the largest water loss was caused by unregistered meters. Department of Public Service Director Earl Billing said the meters in the Chatham Hills subdivision need to be rebuilt.  
The city also contracted with National Port-a-test of Kentucky to test many of the city's larger meters. Meters at Mills Products Co. and Farmington High School were malfunctioning, the test showed.  
AS A RESULT of work by National Port-a-test, the city should save 195,000 gallons of water a day at an annual \$20,000 savings.  
"The two studies proved that the city should begin an annual meter maintenance program to inspect all meters in the city on a predetermined schedule," Deadman said.  
"We'll be budgeting for the purchase of test instruments so we may begin a program of testing the 2,000 smaller meters in the community. We also plan to use the services of National Port-a-test to periodically test larger meters in the community."  
The city's water loss has again returned to a normal loss of about 10 percent, Deadman said.



**Lining up**  
The cookie line at Gill Elementary School led to more than just another afternoon session with a glass of milk. The students explored the meaning of old age with some seniors. For a look at the meeting between youth and old age, turn to Page 3A. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

## Councils to square off on role of Aging Board

By MARY GNIEWEK  
The Farmington City Council lauded the recently maligned joint Commission on Aging Monday, vowing to review its goals and objectives with Farmington Hills officials and not to ask for the resignation of any commissioners.  
At the request of the Farmington Hills City Council, Farmington officials selected the advisory commission to resign, citing a lack of cooperation with the Farmington Hills Council.  
Lange and Councilmen Jack Burwell and Donn Wolf were elected last November on an anti-Freedom and Drake roads senior citizen/low-income family housing platform that was supported by the aging commission, whose function it is to acquire information about senior citizens, including housing needs.  
The three-year-old commission acquired such information for Farmington, which is currently constructing a senior citizen apartment building downtown.  
The senior citizen housing controversy raged in the Farmington Hills Council race and the commission was

accused of disseminating information about elderly housing needs without authorization of the city council.  
"THEY'RE ACCUSING us of political interference," Dr. Joseph Gadbaw, commission chairman, told the Farmington City Council.  
Gadbaw was referring to a fall newsletter which contained facts about the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, which was to have supported with bonds the ill-fated Freedom/Drake project.  
"We were only doing what we were supposed to do. It didn't suit some of the elected council members," he said.  
About the goals of the commission, formed in 1977 to promote the rights of the elderly and establish community awareness, Gadbaw said: "If they (the Farmington Hills Council) object to the goals, they object to living."  
Hartsock said the review committee will look at the commissions goals objectively.  
"It's evident there's a problem between some commissioners and Hills councilmen," he said. "We can't resolve that by looking at the goals."  
Three commissioners live in Farmington and four reside in Farmington Hills, each serving staggered three-year terms. They were appointed by the city councils in their respective cities.  
Commissioner Aldo Vagnozzi, an object of Lange's wrath for accusing the council of perpetrating a hoax concerning senior housing, said he will not resign his post.

"They cannot unilaterally throw people off the commission," Vagnozzi said. "They also cannot unilaterally force people to quit before their terms are up. To try to do so emasculates our city charter."  
Vagnozzi said the council is "holding hostage" two seats on the commission which two Farmington Hills residents have shown an interest in obtaining. At full strength, the commission can have three Farmington and seven Farmington Hills representatives. Three Farmington Hills seats are now vacant.

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