



PATIENT SAFETY INITIATIVE

Alert - May 2006

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MRIs & Sandbags Filled with Metal Shot

The New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services (Department) has received a report of a Potentially Serious Adverse Event, a "Near Miss" involving a sandbag that was filled with metal shot, not sand.

Immediately following a cardiac catheterization, a patient required an emergency MRI. As is the standard practice, pressure utilizing a towel-wrapped sandbag was applied to the groin, the site of catheter access, before leaving the catheterization lab.

When the MRI started, the bag moved towards the patient's head and became adherent to the rim of the machine. Staff was able to remove the patient who, fortunately, sustained no serious injuries.

Examination of the sandbag revealed that it was filled with metal shot. The hospital also reported that all documentation, original order forms, invoices and packing slips, stated that the product was "sandbags" and the product number was that for sandbags, not metal shot bags.

The Department strongly recommends that all "sandbags" are carefully examined to ascertain that they are indeed filled with sand and that you also check with your vendors to ensure that there are no miscommunications about orders. If you have metal shot filled bags, and there is any possibility that a patient could leave an area with the bag and go for an MRI, or any other procedure where the presence of metal is contraindicated, you should remove all of the metal shot bags at your facility and replace them with sand-filled ones. Your cooperation in this will ensure that a similar event, perhaps with a more tragic outcome, will not occur.