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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 13, 2012

IEMA Working with Federal Officials to Identify, Secure Contaminated Tissue Box Holders

Items Pose No Immediate Health Risk

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) today announced it is coordinating with federal officials and Bed, Bath and Beyond to identify and secure decorative tissue box holders that are contaminated with low-levels of cobalt-60, a radioactive material. While the holders present no immediate health risk, IEMA is working with federal officials to prevent unnecessary radiation exposure by anyone who comes in contact with them.

The contaminated items are in the Dual Ridge Boutique product line, model number DR9M . They were manufactured at a facility in India and shipped to a Bed, Bath and Beyond distribution site in New Jersey. The items were shipped to the company's stores in 20 states, including at least two stores in the Chicago area; one at 1800 N. Clyborne Street in Chicago and the other at 3232 Lake Avenue in Wilmette.

On Wednesday, staff from IEMA's Bureau of Radiation Safety visited both locations where store officials had already removed and secured the entire product line from store shelves. At the Chicago store, four tissue box holders were found to have elevated radiation levels. At the Wilmette location, three tissue box holders with elevated radiation levels were identified. Several other bath accessory items within the same product line, which had also been removed from store shelves, were surveyed and showed no signs of radioactive contamination.

At both stores, the contaminated items were segregated and secured to prevent further exposure to employees or customers.

As a reference of the relative risk of these items, a person who spends 10 hours within one foot of the holder would receive a dose equivalent to a single chest x-ray.

On Friday, IEMA is sending staff to seven additional Bed, Bath and Beyond stores in the Chicago area that received items in the product line since September. At this time, it doesn't appear any of the affected items were shipped to stores in other areas of the state.

“These holders do not pose an immediate health risk, but we always want to prevent unnecessary exposure to radiation,” said IEMA Director Jonathon Monken. “We’re continuing to work closely with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and store officials until we confirm that all items have been located and secured.”

Customers who believe they may have purchased a tissue box holder from the Dual Ridge Boutique product line should contact Bed, Bath and Beyond at 1-800-462-3966.