

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-05-001

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information is as initially received without verification or evaluation, and is basically all that is known by the Region IV staff on this date.

Facility

San Diego Harbor
San Diego, CA

Licensee Emergency Classification

Notification of Unusual Event
 Alert
 Site Area Emergency
 General Emergency
 Not Applicable

SUBJECT: DISCOVERY OF COBALT-60 SOURCE ONBOARD A CRUISE SHIP

DESCRIPTION: On January 25, 2005, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) called the NRC Headquarters Operations Center requesting assistance and providing notification of the existence of a radioactive source in an unidentified piece of equipment on a cruise ship. The USCG representative stated that a radioactive source was being stored in a weather deck locker on the ship, which was moored in San Diego, California. When removed from its shielded container, the sealed source resulted in an radiation survey instrument reading of 8.2 milliSievert/hr (820 millirem[mrem]/hr) at a distance of 30.5 cm (1 foot). Additionally, when the source was in the shielded container, it read essentially background. A plaque on the equipment indicated that the sealed source contained 18.5 megabecquerel (0.5 milliCurie [mCi]) of cobalt-60. The device was manufactured by Ginge Fire and Electronics Ltd and believed to be a Model 62A02 level indicator (Sealed Source and Device Registry # NR-8004-D-801-S). The device was initially located by representatives of the Department of Energy, who were aboard the ship doing testing one deck under the unknown device when their instruments detected it. The device was used for measuring carbon-dioxide level in fire suppression equipment. The USCG stated that the crew on the ship was not aware of what the equipment was used for, but based on their knowledge, the device had not been used for at least 2 years.

At approximately 5:30 p.m. PST on January 26, 2005, a State of California representative took possession of the device from the ship's agent. The representative's radiation exposure readings on the device in the shielded container were 5 microSievert/hr (500 microRoentgen/hr). Additionally, wipe tests on the device indicated no radioactive contamination. The device is currently being stored by the State of California at its Hazmat Team Storage area in San Diego.

This information has been discussed with the California Department of Health Services and is current as of 1:45 p.m. (CST) on January 28, 2005.

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