

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-I-07-003

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 I staff on this date.

Facility

Underwood Engineering Testing Co., Inc.
3 South Black Horse Pike
Mt. Ephraim, New Jersey 08059

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Docket No. 03021053
License No. 29-23425-01

SUBJECT: FOUND TROXLER MOISTURE/DENSITY PORTABLE GAUGE

On March 23, 2007, a Troxler moisture density gauge that had been reported stolen (Event No. 43251) from a construction site in Philadelphia was found. On March 19, 2007, the gauge was stored on the bed of a pickup truck and sometime between 2:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. the gauge was stolen. The licensee notified the Philadelphia Police Department of the theft.

The gauge contained an 8 millicurie sealed source of cesium 137 and a 40 mCi sealed neutron source of americium 241. On March 22, 2007, the Philadelphia Police found an empty gauge transport container near a scrap yard. The police informed the NRC that they believed the gauge was at the scrap yard and cordoned off the property.

Region I dispatched two inspectors and their supervisor to the scrap yard to conduct surveys and to monitor the event response. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Commonwealth) also dispatched a radiological emergency response team to the site to assist with the surveys. Radiological surveys of the facility indicated that the radioactive material was confined to a 30-gallon plastic trash can. The rod handle of the gauge was also visible indicating that the gauge was in the can. Dose rates at the surface of the can were approximately 8 mrem/hr. As a precaution, the first responders sent several individuals who were in the building to a local hospital to confirm they were not contaminated. The hospital staff verified that the individuals were not contaminated.

The licensee has hired an NRC-licensed contractor to remove the gauge from the site for proper disposal. A Region I inspector is on site to monitor removal of the radioactive material from the site. The NRC will also conduct a follow-up inspection at the licensee's facility to determine if all regulatory requirements for controlling radioactive sources were implemented to minimize the potential for theft.

This information is current as of 12:30 p.m. on March 23, 2007. The content of this notification has been coordinated with the Commonwealth. The Region I Public Affairs Office has responded to media inquiries. The event received extensive media coverage.

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