

March 3, 2008

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-2008-002

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, Arlington, Texas, staff on this date.

Facility

Sabia, Inc.
Idaho Falls, Idaho
Docket No. 03035997
License No. 11-27727-01

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: CONTAMINATION OF WORKER

DESCRIPTION:

On February 29, 2008, Sabia, Incorporated reported that a worker had become contaminated after a 57 millicurie (approximately) Strontium-90 (Sr-90) source was breached (EN #44023). Industrial gauges were being disassembled at a Sabia facility near Idaho Falls, Idaho. The worker was contaminated on his hands, face, and clothing, and inhaled some of the material. He was taken to a local health care facility where medical officials consulted with the Oak Ridge Radiation Emergency Assistance Center (REAC) regarding his radiation exposure. He was released later on February 29. The licensee stated that REAC estimated that the dose received by the worker was below regulatory limits.

After the incident, the licensee locked up the facility with the intent to re-enter on the morning of March 3. An NRC Region IV inspector responded to the facility on the evening of February 29 and began follow up of the incident. Through inspection, interviews, and a series of telephone calls with Sabia officials, the NRC learned that the extent of workplace contamination and other important details of the incident were not well understood by the licensee. The licensee also had not initiated collection of samples for bioassay testing of all the workers. Preliminary radiation surveys by the NRC inspector did not identify any public safety threat due to radioactive contamination outside the facility.

Several conference calls involving officials from Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Department of Energy - Idaho National Laboratory (DOE/INL), Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security, and other organizations were held. On March 2, a DOE Radiological Assistance Program (RAP) team, accompanied by the Region IV NRC inspector and an Idaho DEQ senior health physicist, began conducting radiological survey activities at the facility to more fully assess the conditions.

The State of Idaho has been informed. The Idaho Bureau of Homeland Security issued a news release late on March 1 and there has been media interest in the response activities. An incident command center has been established by local officials, including law enforcement, near the facility and a press conference was held there on March 2. The NRC is continuing to work with State and local officials, other federal organizations, and the licensee to ensure that the contamination is contained, radiation doses to the workers are properly assessed, and recovery activities are appropriately conducted.

Region IV received initial notification of this occurrence by phone call from Sabia officials at 3:45 p.m. (CST) at February 29, 2008.

The information presented herein has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 7:00 a.m. (CST) on Monday, March 3, 2008.

ADAMS ACCESSION NUMBER: ML080630264

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