United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road King of Prussia, PA 19401
Fax: 610/337-5241

Internet: dps@nrc.gov or nas@nrc.gov

I-97-142 October 30, 1997 Contact: Diane Screnci, (610)337-5330 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Neil A. Sheehan, (610) 337-5331

NRC STAFF SENDS INSPECTORS IN RESPONSE TO BROKEN EXIT SIGN AT NEW JERSEY FACILITY

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection has notified the Nuclear Regulatory Commission that a tritium exit sign was broken last night (10/29) by a patient at the Arthur Brisbane Child Treatment Center in Farmingdale, N.J., leading to precautionary evacuations at the facility.

The sign contained about 15 curies of tritium, a radioactive isotope that releases a relatively weak form of radiation. The material does not pose any immediate health hazard to residents or staff at the facility or members of the public.

Officials at the Center alerted the New Jersey DEP, which in turn contacted the NRC. Representatives from the DEP, NRC and the Department of Energy's Brookhaven National Laboratory have responded to the event, and are taking samples from the Center to determine the extent of contamination.

Urine samples are also being collected from any potentially exposed patients and staff members. Results are not expected to be available until at least Friday.

The NRC staff has dispatched two inspectors and a supervisor to the facility to assist the State as needed.

The Arthur Brisbane Child Treatment Center is one of seven psychiatric facilities operated by the State of New Jersey. Patients, who live at the facility, range in age from 11 to 17 years of age.

The sign is licensed by the NRC under a general license.