

September 10, 2001

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-01-040

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

Western Technologies Inc.
Albuquerque, New Mexico
License No.: DM 244-29
New Mexico Agreement State Licensee

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: LOST OR STOLEN PORTABLE GAUGE

DESCRIPTION:

On September 7, 2001, the New Mexico Radiation Licensing and Registration Program notified NRC's Operations Center of a lost or stolen portable gauge. The State was informed by Western Technologies on September 6, 2001, that a Troxler Electronic Laboratories, Inc. Model 3430 (Serial No. 28170) portable moisture density gauge containing a 1.48 gigabequerel (40 millicurie) source of americium-241/beryllium (Serial No. 47-24879) and a 0.296 gigabequerel (8 millicurie) source of cesium-137 (Serial No. 750-2120) was missing. Western Technologies informed the State that the gauge operator had left the gauge at a temporary job site located at mile marker 49 on US Highway 550 near Cuba, New Mexico. The gauge operator realized that he did not have the gauge when he arrived at the licensee's next temporary job site and returned to the original site within an hour to discover the gauge missing. The gauge had been left on the side of the highway not secured in its transportation case. The handle source assembly of the gauge was in the safe position, but was not locked. The licensee has notified the local police department and the state police and plans to issue a press release offering a reward for the missing gauge.

The state of New Mexico has informed the authorities in Mexico and the states of Arizona, Colorado, Texas and Utah. The State is planning to issue a press release.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence from NRC's Operations Center at 8:00 p.m. (CDT) on September 7, 2001. Region IV has informed NMSS, OSTP, OEDO, IAT and the Region's SLO and PAO.

This information has been discussed with the State and is current as of 10:00 a.m. (CDT) on September 10, 2001.

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