

September 13, 2001

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

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: UPDATE CONCERNING A MISSING 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. 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 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 notified the local police department and state police and issued a press release offering a reward for the missing gauge. The State also issued a press release including pictures of the device and posted flyers in public areas between San Ysidro, New Mexico and Cuba, New Mexico.

The State provided an update to the initial report on September 12, 2001. The gauge had been left by an unknown individual at Western Technologies' temporary laboratory location at San Ysidro, New Mexico, approximately 30 miles southeast of the last known gauge location. The licensee reported that the gauge was found with the source rod in the safe position, covered with dirt, but otherwise in good working condition. The licensee has returned the gauge to their Albuquerque office for leak testing of the source. The gauge has been taken out of service until leak test results are received.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence from the State at 5:45 p.m. (CDT) on September 12, 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 10:30 a.m. (CDT) on September 13, 2001.

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