

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-02-002

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 Region II staff (Atlanta, Georgia) on this date.

Facility

Building and Earth Sciences
 (An Agreement State License)
 Auburn, AL
 License: No. 1266

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: STOLEN PORTABLE GAUGE

The Alabama Office of Radiation Control notified the NRC Operations Center that the licensee reported that a portable gauge was stolen between 5:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m., on Friday, January 18, 2002, in Auburn, Alabama. The licensee reported the gauge was locked inside a transportation case which was chained to the bed of the licensee's pickup truck, and the truck's bed had a pop-up cover. The cover was opened by the perpetrator, the chain was cut and the case removed while the truck was parked at a local restaurant. The gauge was a Troxler Electronics, Model 3430, Serial Number 30208, containing 44 millicuries (1.63 gigabecquerels) of cesium-137 and 9 millicuries (333 megabecquerels) of americium-241.

The gauge, still locked in the transportation case, was abandoned later that night on Spring Hill Road in Auburn. The Auburn Police Department recovered the device, contacted the local Haz-Mat team, and delivered the device to Auburn University on Saturday afternoon, where the device and transportation case were secured in a radioactive materials storage area. Licensee representatives picked up the device from Auburn University on Tuesday morning, January 22, 2002. The device, locked in the transportation case, does not present a radiation hazard.

The State of Alabama did not receive notification of this event until Tuesday, January 22, 2002, and the State notified the NRC Operations center and Region II on Tuesday afternoon. This information has been discussed with the State and is current as of 10:30 a.m., Wednesday, January 23, 2002.

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