

February 8, 2002

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-02-001B

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

Source Production and Equipment Company
St. Rose, Louisiana
(State of Louisiana Licensee)

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: HIGH RADIATION LEVELS DETECTED ON IMPORTED PACKAGE OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL - UPDATE

DESCRIPTION: This provides updated information regarding an event which occurred on January 2, 2002, when Source Production and Equipment Company (SPEC), a State of Louisiana licensee, notified the National Response Center of the discovery of high radiation levels measured on a package containing iridium-192 (Ir-192) received by the licensee on January 2. The shipment contained approximately 347.8 terabecquerels (9400 curies) of Ir-192. The package is a Type -B container (Certificate USA/0382/B9U)-85, Revision 9), manufactured in Great Britain (Croft, Model 2835A).

On February 7, 2002, the licensee opened the package to determine the cause of the incident. It was discovered upon opening that screw caps were off of two of the three capsules inside the inner container of the package, and that the Ir-192 wafers were out of the capsules. In addition, it was noticed that some of the wafers had oxidized and were stuck to the inside of the inner container and to each other.

The licensee plans to continue efforts to retrieve the usable Ir-192 wafers. The Department of Transportation has made plans to send the shipping package to Oak Ridge National Laboratories for evaluation at a date to be determined. Representatives from the State of Louisiana monitored the package opening activities. An inspector from NRC Region IV was also on site to observe the activities. Other observers included representatives from the Department of Transportation, the package manufacturer, the Ir-192 supplier, and the Swedish Regulatory Authority.

This information has been discussed with the State and is current as of 9:00 a.m. (CST) on February 8, 2002. Region IV has informed OEDO, NMSS, and STP.

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