

April 18, 2002

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-02-017

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 III staff on this date.

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Licensee Emergency Classification</u>
Northern Engraving	<input type="checkbox"/> Notification of Unusual Event
Sparta, Wisconsin	<input type="checkbox"/> Alert
Docket:	<input type="checkbox"/> Site Area Emergency
License: General Licensee (10 CFR 31.5)	<input type="checkbox"/> General Emergency
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

SUBJECT: Am-241 Static Eliminator Device Missing

DESCRIPTION:

On April 16, 2002, Northern Engraving located in Sparta, Wisconsin, a general licensee, reported the loss of two static eliminator devices to the NRC Operations Center. One of the devices caused a radiation detector to alarm at a scrap processor in LaCrosse, WI on April 12 and was recovered; the other device remains unaccounted for. The devices each contained a nominal 11.2 millicurie americium-241 sealed source. The devices are NRD Model A-2003 static eliminators. They were used to reduce the static charge on plastic sheet goods used in the engraving process. An extensive search was conducted to recover the still-missing device, but it was not found.

The State of Wisconsin and the Office of Nuclear Materials Safety and Safeguards were notified of the initial event at the scrap processor. State personnel responded to the facility, performed surveys, identified the static eliminator as the source and facilitated its return to the general licensee. Digital photos of the device, taken by State of Wisconsin personnel, were received in Region III on April 17, and they indicated damage to the source plate. Further discussions with State revealed that smears taken from the device on April 12 had showed some loose contamination.

A Region III inspector was dispatched on April 18 to go to the general licensee's facility in Sparta, WI. The NRC inspector will join with State of Wisconsin inspectors for further survey work and to conduct additional search efforts for the still-missing device.

The information in this preliminary notification has been reviewed with the licensee.

The licensee notified the NRC Operations Center of this event on 4:00 p.m. EST on April 16, 2002. This information is current as of 12:00 p.m. CST on April 18, 2002.

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