

March 20, 2003

THIS EVENT IS NOT FOR PUBLIC DISCLOSURE PER AGREEMENT STATE REQUEST UNTIL 3/22/03.

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-03-018

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

Southwest Research Institute
6220 Culebra Road
San Antonio, TX 78238-5166
License No: L00775
Texas Agreement State Licensee

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: RADIOACTIVE SHIPMENT IN EXCESS OF EXTERNAL CONTAMINATION LIMITS

DESCRIPTION:

On March 19, 2003, the NRC Operations Center received notification from the Texas Bureau of Radiation Control (BRC) that a package, externally contaminated with scandium-46 in excess of NRC and DOT regulatory limits (10 CFR 19.06, 10 CFR 71.87 and 49 CFR 173.443), was received at Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Texas.

On March 19, 2003, the BRC received notification from Southwest Research Institute (SRI), a Texas licensee located in San Antonio Texas, that a package (contents unknown at this time), originating from Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas, was received at the Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Texas, contaminated with scandium- 46. Package receipt surveys indicated surface contamination levels on the top of the package exceeded US Department of Transportation beta-gamma contamination limits. Package contamination survey results were confined to the top of the shipping package and were determined to be a maximum activity of 10,000 dpm per 100 square centimeters. The sides of the package, inside container, shipping pallet, common carrier vehicle and driver were found not to be contaminated. A BRC inspector has been dispatched to SRI to investigate the circumstances of this event. Region IV is continuing to follow up this event.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence from NRC's Operations Center on March 19, 2003. Region IV has informed NMSS, OEDO, OSTP, and the Region's SLO and PAO.

This information has been discussed with the State and is current as of 1:00 p.m., on March 20, 2003.

CONTACTS: Larry Donovan
817-860-8140

Elmo Collins
817-860-8106