

File

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR MATERIAL SAFETY AND SAFEGUARDS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

May 25, 1988

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 88-32: PROMPT REPORTING TO NRC OF SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS INVOLVING RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL

Addressees:

All NRC material licensees.

Purpose:

This notice is to emphasize the importance of prompt reports to NRC of significant incidents involving licensed radioactive materials, as required by 10 CFR Sections 20.402 and 20.403. It is expected that licensees will review this notice, distribute it to responsible radiation safety staff, and consider actions, as appropriate, to assure that NRC receives prompt notification of such incidents. However, this information notice does not constitute new NRC requirements, and no written response is required.

Description of Circumstances:

Title 10 CFR Sections 20.402 and 20.403 require certain incidents involving licensed radioactive material to be promptly reported to NRC. The most significant incidents must be reported immediately, and others must be reported within 24 hours. The types of incidents to be reported are radiation overexposures, excessive releases of radioactive material, loss of facility operations exceeding one day, damage to property exceeding \$2000, and loss or theft of significant quantities of radioactive material.

One case involved a 1986 contamination incident at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. Radiation workers in a radioactive waste storage building opened a package containing americium-241, and inadvertently spread contamination within the building. The event was not initially reported to the NRC. When the licensee's staff initiated decontamination efforts, the contamination got worse. The event was not reported to NRC for eight days, and the initial report did not adequately describe the extent of the contamination. NRC was not fully informed of the seriousness of the contamination until 27 days later, when reports were received from third parties, and inspectors were dispatched to the site. Clean-up efforts eventually required several weeks and cost several hundred thousand dollars.

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Other incidents which have not been promptly reported to the NRC have included a serious fire which damaged a device containing radioactive material, and losses of gauges containing radioactive material.

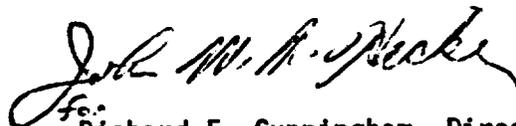
Discussion:

It is important that significant incidents involving licensed radioactive material be promptly reported to NRC in accordance with 10 CFR Sections 20.402 and 20.403. Incidents should be reported to the NRC Operations Center, which is staffed 24 hours-per-day, at telephone number 202-951-0550. It is important that NRC receive such prompt notifications so that we can immediately determine the need for appropriate emergency actions to protect the public health and safety. Violations involving the failure to report incidents promptly could result in escalated enforcement actions from NRC.

It is suggested that licensees carefully review the requirements of 10 CFR Sections 20.402 and 20.403. In particular, incidents involving loss or theft of radioactive materials, fires which damage devices containing radioactive material, or contamination incidents which cause loss of use of facilities or devices, or require expensive clean-up, should be promptly evaluated as to whether they must be promptly reported to NRC.

In some cases, failure to report incidents to NRC may have been due to licensees' misinterpretation of the requirements of 10 CFR Part 20. The NRC staff is reviewing 10 CFR Sections 20.402 and 20.403, and will make clarifying amendments as appropriate.

No written response is required by this notice. If you have any questions regarding this information notice, please contact the appropriate NRC Regional Office or this office.



Richard E. Cunningham, Director
Division of Industrial and
Medical Nuclear Safety
Office of Nuclear Material Safety
and Safeguards

Technical Contact: J. R. Metzger, NMSS
(301) 492-3424

Attachment: List of Recently Issued NRC Information Notices

LIST OF RECENTLY ISSUED
NRC INFORMATION NOTICES

Information Notice No.	Subject	Date of Issuance	Issued to
88-31	Steam Generator Tube Rupture Analysis Deficiency	5/25/88	All holders of OLs or CPs for Westinghouse and Combustion Engineering-designed nuclear power plants.
88-30	Target Rock Two-Stage SRV Setpoint Drift Update	5/25/88	All holders of OLs or CPs for nuclear power reactors.
88-29	Deficiencies in Primary Containment Low-Voltage Electrical Penetration Assemblies	5/24/88	All holders of OLs or CPs for nuclear power reactors.
88-28	Potential for Loss of Post-LOCA Recirculation Capability Due to Insulation Debris Blockage	5/19/88	All holders of OLs or CPs for nuclear power reactors.
88-27	Deficient Electrical Terminations Identified in Safety-Related Components	5/18/88	All holders of OLs or CPs for nuclear power reactors.
85-35, Supplement 1	Failure of Air Check Valves to Seat	5/17/88	All holders of OLs or CPs for nuclear power reactors.
88-26	Falsified Pre-Employment Screening Records	5/16/88	All holders of OLs or CPs for nuclear power reactors and all major fuel facility licensees.

OL = Operating License
CP = Construction Permit

Other incidents which have not been promptly reported to the NRC have included a serious fire which damaged a device containing radioactive material, and losses of gauges containing radioactive material.

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Attachment: List of Recently Issued NRC Information Notices
Ellen Kraus, Editor 5/ /88

OFC :INMS	:INMS	:INMS
NAME:DCool	:JHickey	:RCunningham
DATE:5/ /88sr	:5/ /88	:5/ /88

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