

July 29, 2003

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-III-03-033

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.

Facility

Westinghouse Electric Company
(Former Hematite Fuel Fabrication Facility)
Festus, Missouri
License No.: SNM-33
Docket No.: 070-00036

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: Scrap Zirconium Tubes Shipped to Recycling Facility in Canada Were Found to Contain Uranium Fuel Pellets

On July 28, 2003, the licensee reported that approximately 30,000 scrap zirconium tubes had been shipped to the Mississauga Metals and Alloys, Inc. facility in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, for recycling. On Thursday, July 24, 2003, Mississauga Metals and Alloys discovered [REDACTED] fuel pellets containing less than 5 % enriched uranium-235 (U-235) in one of the shipping boxes. The pellets contain a total of [REDACTED] of U-235. The Westinghouse Hematite facility was notified of the fuel pellet discovery on July 28, 2003.

At the time fuel pellets were discovered, Mississauga Metals and Alloys had processed about 50 percent of the zirconium tubes. The remaining tubes were appropriately placed in a secure location, and further processing was halted. The situation poses no threat to public health and safety.

NRC Region III plans to conduct a special inspection at the Westinghouse Hematite facility in Festus, Missouri beginning on July 31, 2003. The purpose of the special inspection will be to review the licensee's material control and accountability (MC&A) program, the segregation of special nuclear material (SNM) from scrap materials, the licensee's verification methods to inspect shipping containers, and the cause of the event and licensee corrective actions.

All appropriate international, federal, and state agencies have been notified. The NRC's Operations Center was notified of the event at 11:58 p.m., EDT on July 28, 2003 (EN 40024). The information in this preliminary notification has been reviewed with licensee management. This information is current as of 1:00 p.m. CDT on July 29, 2003.

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