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BLUE SHEET

(REGION I WORK FORM)

No. _____

Date: _____

DIRECTORATE OF REGULATORY OPERATIONS
NOTIFICATION OF AN INCIDENT OR OCCURRENCE

Facility Nuclear Metals, Incorporated, Concord, Massachusetts.

License No. SMB-179

Docket No. 40-672

Problem Undetected contamination spread in the plant with the possibility of transfer to the homes of employees.

During an RO inspection of the licensee on December 28 a significant spread of radioactive contamination was detected (daughter products of U-238 released during melt operation) in a work area and, to a lesser extent, in the rest of the plant. The results of direct measurements by RO inspector revealed that while it was unlikely that contamination levels were so high as to present a health hazard (17,000 DPM/100 cm²), the extent of the contamination spread and the fact that the licensee was unaware of its presence and had no area contamination control measures in effect indicated that prompt action was appropriate. Accordingly, the homes of the five employees who work directly with the material were checked for contamination. In addition, RO informed the company, and obtained an agreement, that immediate contamination control measures were necessary and would be implemented. A letter confirming the agreement was sent to the licensee on January 7, including confirmation that the operation involved had been shut down on January 3 and would not be restarted until the situation had been resolved to the satisfaction of the AEC.

The state of Massachusetts was kept fully informed of RO actions. Representatives of the Massachusetts Departments of Labor and Public Health accompanied RO inspectors during the survey of the homes of five employees and their automobiles.

Action

1. Low levels of contamination were found on items of personal clothing in the homes of four of the employees and were returned to the plant for decontamination. In no case did the surveys reveal other contamination in the homes.

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2. Low levels of contamination were found in a few of the automobiles. This material was removed by plant personnel.
3. A review of licensee action was also conducted and the indication of continuing low levels of contamination in the unrestricted office area was brought to management attention.
4. The advisability and apparent feasibility of whole body counting of the employees involved was reviewed with management who stated that whole body counting would be done.
5. A press release on this matter was issued by RO:I early in the afternoon of January 9.
6. Review, follow-up and appropriate enforcement action is planned by Region I to ensure adequate corrective and preventative measures are taken by licensee.

Further information may be obtained from: _____

Distribution: _____