

March 1, 1996

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-I-96-011A

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 Region I staff (King of Prussia, Pennsylvania) on this date.

Facility

Nuclear Metals, Inc.
2229 Main Street
Concord, Massachusetts 01742
Dockets: 04000672 License No: SMB-179

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: UPDATE TO PN196-11 VENT FIRE AT NUCLEAR METALS, INC.

On February 23, 1996 at 2:45 p.m., the NRC Region I staff was notified by the Senior Health Physicist at Nuclear Metals, Inc. in Concord, Massachusetts, that a fire occurred in the licensee's liquid radioactive waste processing system on February 21, 1996. Region I sent an inspector to the site on February 27-28, 1996 to evaluate the licensee's response and corrective actions.

Additional information regarding the incident was discussed. The following information clarifies some of the information reported in PN-96-11 that was issued on February 26, 1996.

The fire initially burned undetected for about one hour. For the next four hours, the licensee had a controlled fire fighting response to the vent fire, which smoked and smoldered. Fire fighters wore self-contained breathing apparatus, and follow-up bioassays are being conducted. Area air samples taken in the building during the event confirmed airborne levels either below detection or a small fraction of one Derived Air Concentration. Based on these air sample results, all further effluents were released through four stacks that exhaust through high efficiency particulate-absolute (HEPA) filters. Two of these stacks also have in-line downstream air samplers. These samples were analyzed on February 25, 1996 and the results confirmed no significant off-site releases.

The affected building, Building E, had been evacuated at 7:35 a.m., on February 21, 1996. After evaluation of area air samples, all workers were permitted access to the building at 12:30 p.m., on February 21, 1996.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Health observed the inspection and the exit meeting. After the inspection the Commonwealth Department of Environmental Protection and the Concord Board of Health were also informed of the NRC inspection results on February 29, 1996. The Region I Office of Public Affairs is prepared to respond to media interest. This information is current as of 12:30 p.m., March 1, 1996.

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