

Thursday, October 11, 2012

Materials Licensing Branch
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Region III
2443 Warrenville Road, Suite 210
Lisle, Illinois 60532-4352

Re: License No. 21-09362-12

Current Event # 48335: 30-Day Region-3 Update Regarding Fixed gauge shutter and isolation lock-out mal-function

As required, this 30-Day “Event 48335 Update”, originally reported Friday, September 21, 2012 describes the repair status of the Ohmart Vega fixed density gauge; (Model SHF1A-0 - serial number 0964CO) located at the 505 Building process area inside Dow Corning Corporation’s Midland, Michigan Chemical Plant.

ORIGINAL SEPTEMBER 21, 2012 INCIDENT REPORT:

Upon request from the 505 building operations team at approximately 18:15 on Friday, September 21, 2012, two Site Shift Leader personnel attempted to close the shutter on the Ohmart Vega fixed density gauge; (Model SHF1A-0 - serial number 0964CO). This lockout procedure facilitates nearby piping modifications in the 505 East Tower area, second deck, and on the east side. The shutter was in the normal open position.

An area survey was performed to determine radiation levels using the x 1 setting with a Ludlum 3-IS meter and 44-6 GM probe (meter #257137, GM probe #285738). All survey equipment was within calibration compliance. A maximum reading of 0.2-mR/hr was found on the detector side of the instrument at an approximate range of two inches. The survey recorded 1.1-mR/hr at the source side approximately 0.5 inches. All readings taken 30-cm or greater from any point of surface contact were observed to be at background levels equal to 0-mR/hr.

The retaining screw on the shutter lever was loosened and an attempt was made to shut the shutter. There was slight movement on the shutter as force was applied, but it appeared that the pivot points were binding up. Gentle back and forth force was applied in an attempt to loosen the shutter, and a gain of about ¼ inch was noticed in each direction...right before the two torx style bolts holding shutter lever to the shutter shaft snapped.

A second survey was performed immediately after with NO change in readings. A visual inspection on the position marks (shutter to housing) show that the shutter is 1/16-1/8” of an inch from full open.

A 0-mR/hr area around this instrument was barricaded off using yellow and magenta radiation barricade tape with “Warning: Radioactive Materials” printed on it.

Contact was made with the building operations staff, Midland Site Radiation Officer, and the Site Safety & Loss Prevention manager regarding this incident.

Continuing attempts are being made to contact the gauge manufacturer Ohmart-Vega to schedule an immediate repair. Until gauge repair can be made, general public access to this immediate area will continue to be restricted.

30-DAY REGION III REPAIR STATUS UPDATE:

Immediately upon finding the 505 Building's gauge malfunction, three lines of direct communications were established with Vega America's, Incorporated Radiation Safety Officer, Technical Services Director, and Field Services Manager resulting in repair kit orders and scheduling on-site service technicians.

On Monday, October 08, 2012, Vega America's, Incorporated communicated that a repair technician will be dispatched on the week of October 15th to the Midland, Michigan Chemical Plant for repairing the 505 Building gauge.

Immediately upon either final gauge repair or further understanding of the malfunction, an additional letter will be sent to the NRC Region III updating and hopefully completing this current event 48335.

Thank you very much for your time and attention with this matter and please do not hesitate to contact me on my cell phone at (989) 954-7052 with any additional questions, comments, and/or concerns.

Sincerely,

David Tray Dillon
Midland Plant Radiation Safety Officer

Michael Whelton
Back-up Radiation Safety Officer
Dow Corning Midland Michigan