

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-89-70 Date November 1, 1989

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: Mercy Hospital	Licensee Emergency
Des Moines, Iowa	Classification:
State of Iowa Licensee	_____ Unusual Event
	_____ Alert
	_____ Site Area Emergency
	_____ General Emergency
	_____ Not Applicable

Subject: CREMATION OF PATIENT WITHOUT REMOVAL OF PLUTONIUM PACEMAKER

On October 31, 1989, the Iowa Radiation Control Program was notified by the licensee that a patient with a plutonium (principally Pu-238) pacemaker had died October 14, 1989. The hospital instructed the funeral home on the removal of the pacemaker, but the funeral home did not follow the instructions. The patient was cremated. Subsequently, funeral home personnel discovered an egg-shaped object in the burn chamber. The object -- apparently the pacemaker -- was placed in normal refuse being sent to a landfill.

The State Radiation Control Program has dispatched personnel to the funeral home to survey the facility to assure there was no breach of the pacemaker housing. Region III (Chicago) has offered assistance to the State agency.

The State also intends to review the licensee's program for control of pacemaker implants.

Region III will continue to monitor the State's investigation and to provide assistance, if requested.

Region III was notified of this incident by the Director, Iowa Radiation Control Program, on October 31, 1989. This information is current as of 10 a.m., November 1, 1989.

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