

SEP 12 1980
September 12, 1980

NOTICE OF NON-ROUTINE EVENT INVOLVING AGREEMENT STATE OR
AGREEMENT MATERIALS - 80-31

This NOTICE constitutes an early report of events occurring in an Agreement State of possible safety or public interest significance. The information presented is as initially received without verification or evaluation and is basically all that is known by State Agreements Program staff as of this date.

AGREEMENT STATE: Washington
FACILITY: Western Nuclear and Dawn Mining Uranium Mills
SUBJECT: Press Conference by Washington PIRG

Washington officials informed OSP staff of a press conference held by Washington PIRG on September 11 and press coverage on September 12. PIRG has called for a full scale investigation by NRC and Congress on the States alleged inability to monitor the environment and contain releases of radioactive material at the subject mills. PIRG obtained water and sediment samples in June from an emergency overflow evaporation pond at the Western Nuclear Sherwood mill. This pond was identified during the licensing process as a potential source of contamination. EPA analyzed the samples for PIRG and in their transmittal letter to PIRG speculated that the material was moving rapidly towards Lake Roosevelt which is some distance down grade from the tailings area.

During July and August, Western Nuclear pumped the evaporation pond dry and removed the contaminated solids. The results of the water sample as reported by EPA show levels about 100 times below unrestricted area MPC's except for radium. Radium was reported at 45 pico curies per liter (pc/l) compared to 30 pc/l. Monitoring wells about 1/4 mile below the evaporation pond have never shown any detectable activity. State officials indicate EPA may be modifying their previous statements.

With regard to the Dawn Mining mill, EPA reported to the State several months ago that there is considerable uncontrolled seepage from the bottom of the tailings pond. Washington agrees and this matter is being evaluated and addressed in conjunction with the renewal application for Dawn. NRC is providing technical assistance on this project.

The Washington Senate Energy Committee has asked the Washington Department of Social and Health Services for a written report on this matter.

Contact: G. W. Kerr, J. Kendig; 492-7767

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on-Routine Event - 80-31

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