

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

Date: August 1, 1980

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-80- 116

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events 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 IE staff on this date.

Facility: Ethicon, Incorporated
Somerville, New Jersey
Docket No. 30-6990

Subject: FIRE INSIDE COBALT-60 IRRADIATOR ROOM ON JULY 31, 1980

The licensee reported that during dose mapping of the Cobalt-60 irradiator, using cartons filled with fiberboard material to simulate the normal samples, and with the mechanical system in a static condition, a fire occurred in some of the cartons apparently due to spontaneous combustion. Smoke was apparent in the irradiator room upon entry after the third exposure and the fire department was promptly notified. The Cobalt sources were in a stored and locked position in the pool at this time.

The fire department entered the facility through the roof plug and extinguished the fire after extensive smoke damage to approximately twenty aluminum carriers.

The licensee is proceeding with clean up of the smoke and water damage, replacement of the carriers, and a complete check of all electrical and mechanical systems.

The licensee reports there was no damage to the sources or radiation exposure to personnel during the fire.

Neither the licensee nor Region I plans to make a press release at this time. The State of New Jersey has been notified. The licensee made notification of this incident by telephone to NRC HQ:DO at 6:10 p.m. on July 31, 1980. Region I contacted the Ethicon representative at 6:40 p.m. on July 31, 1980. Region I will conduct an inspection of the facility before August 15, 1980.

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