

Date: February 17, 1981

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-81-23

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: Commercial Truck Terminal (non-licensee)
Boston, Massachusetts

Subject: LEAKING DRUM CONTAINING NATURAL URANIUM

A liquid was observed in a truck which was carrying a radiography device and 9 drums of phosphoric acid containing natural uranium. One of the drums was apparently leaking and two others were stained. A representative of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health surveyed the truck and its contents and detected no leakage of radioactive materials. The radiography device contains a 15 curie iridium source and is being shipped from the Kennedy Space Center to Technical Operations in Burlington, Massachusetts. The nine drums contain phosphoric acid and small quantities of natural uranium. The concentration of natural uranium is 1-5 grams per liter of solution. The drums were being shipped from New Wales Chemicals, Mulberry, Florida to Ionics, Watertown, Massachusetts for analysis. Representative from Ionics states that the drums will be returned to New Wales Chemicals after repackaging.

There has been considerable media interest in the Boston area. No press release is planned. Region I has responded to press inquiries. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been informed.

This Preliminary Notification is issued for information only and no further action by IE is anticipated. Region I first received information of this occurrence at 11:10 p.m. during an inquiry from a Boston newspaper reporter to the Regional PAO, who called the Dorchester, MA Fire Department and confirmed the fact that Massachusetts authorities had responded to such an incident. Region I subsequently received notification of this occurrence by a telephone call from the Headquarters Duty Officer at 11:45 p.m. on February 16, 1981.

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