

DCS No: 03000234901129  
Date: November 29, 1990

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-90-102

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 I staff on this date.

Facility:  
Medical Center of Central  
Massachusetts/Memorial  
(Worcester Memorial Hospital)  
119 Belmont Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts 01605  
License No. 20-02452-03

Licensee Emergency Classification:  
☐ Notification of Unusual Event  
☐ Alert  
☐ Site Area Emergency  
☐ General Emergency  
☒ Not Applicable

Subject: POSSIBLE FIRE IN A TELETHERAPY MACHINE

At approximately 11:15 a.m. on November 29, 1990, Region I received a telephone call from the licensee's teletherapy physicist regarding a possible flash fire in the head of a Theratronics 780 teletherapy machine.

At approximately 9:00 a.m. the technologist noticed a smell of smoke when she went into the treatment room to assist the patient in exiting the room, immediately after the patient's treatment. The technologist quickly escorted the patient out of the room and informed the physicist of the smell of smoke in the room. The source was retracted into the shielded position at the time the technologist entered the room. There was no indication of fire other than the smell of smoke.

The patient was asked if he noticed the smell of smoke when he entered the treatment room or during his treatment. The patient told the physicist that he did not notice the smell of smoke until the technologist made him aware of it.

The physicist verified the source position within the head by using the manual source retraction rod, and making dose rate measurements at the teletherapy machine head with a GM survey meter. The permanent radiation monitor (a Primalert) located within the treatment room was also checked with a check source to verify that the monitor was working properly. The Primalert indicated that the source was in the shielded position, and shielding was not affected.

The licensee called Theratronics immediately. A Theratronics representative is expected to arrive on November 29, 1990.

The teletherapy machine has been taken out of service until the cause of the smoke smell is determined.

The Region will continue to follow up on the cause of this incident and coordinate with NMSS on potential generic implications. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been notified. This information is current as of 12:00 p.m. on November 29, 1990.

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