

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-91-2

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:
Various Sites in Camden
County, New Jersey

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

Docket No. None

Subject: STATE OF NEW JERSEY ANNOUNCES INVESTIGATION OF THORIUM CONTAMINATED SITES IN CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

On January 3, 1991, the State of New Jersey, at a meeting with local officials, announced its plans to perform radiation surveys and possible remediation of various sites in parts of Camden and Gloucester City in Camden County, New Jersey. At least two companies in these areas used natural thorium in the manufacture of mantles for lamps and lanterns over 50 years ago and some wastes containing radioactive materials remain in the vicinity. Approximately 800 homes, 70 other buildings and various open areas are to be surveyed.

The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had previously identified the presence of two radioactive material processing sites in Camden County, New Jersey. Preliminary surveys confirmed the presence of low radiation levels at three of six tested locations within the two processing sites. Exposure levels as high as 0.24 millirem per hour were measured in the Camden area. However, the DEP focused its testing and clean-up efforts in three Essex County communities where residential exposure to elevated radiation levels was much greater.

The state expects to begin the surveys this month with completion in two months. Remediation plans will be developed and implemented immediately based upon the testing results. A search for responsible parties to bear costs has been unsuccessful. The program will be paid for with State superfund monies. A toll-free phone number has been provided by the State to answer questions from local residents.

While NRC does regulate natural thorium, these sites were contaminated prior to existence of the AEC. The state has the legal authority and at least partial resources to take remedial action and much of the contamination is likely to be below the concentrations requiring an NRC license. Therefore, Region I plans no regulatory action at this time.

NRC Region I will monitor the situation to determine if NRC action becomes necessary and will respond to media inquiries.

The information is complete as of 9:00 A.M. January 4, 1991.

CONTACT: J. Kinneman
(FTS) 346-5252

M. Roberts
(FTS) 346-5094

0/1
2:00
JE34

DISTRIBUTION:

OWEN
Chairman Carr
Comm. Rogers
Comm. Curtiss
Comm. Remick

MNBB
AEOD
IRM
OIG

L-St.
PDR

NL
RES

Mail: ADM:DMB
DOT:Trans only

NRC Ops Ctr _____

CA EDO
OGC NMSS
GPA NRR
PA OE
SP

Phillips
ACRS

INPO----
NSAC----

Regional Offices _____

RI Resident Office _____

EW
ASLAP

Licensee: _____
(Reactor Licensees)

Region I Form 83
(Rev. April 1988)