

DCS No: 99990001910118
Date: January 18, 1991

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-91-7B

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:
Nuclear Sources and Services
Houston, Texas
Agreement State Licensee

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

Subject: UPDATE ON PNO-I-91-7, DAMAGE TO CONTAINER OF RADIOACTIVE
MATERIALS
ON BOARD A SHIP

NRC Region I health physicists boarded the MERKUR AFRICA during the morning of January 17, 1991, accompanied by U.S. Department of Transportation and U.S. Coast Guard representatives, and the Radiation Safety Officer (RSO), Nuclear Sources and Services, Incorporated (NSSI). Of the fourteen known sources on board prior to damage to the shipping container, thirteen have been found and recovered. The missing source is a 1.5 Ci cesium-137 source. Four of the recovered sources were found outside their shields, and were returned to their shields. All thirteen of the recovered sources are now in their original shielding containers. Although some of the shielding containers suffered minor damage, they provide adequate shielding to allow the crew access to the area to continue the search for the other source. This search continues during the morning of January 18, 1991.

The four sources discovered outside their containers exhibited contact dose rates as high as 100 R/hr, and evaluations of the extremity exposures to crew members are being performed.

The RSO for NSSI has arranged for overnight delivery of new shields, and expects to replace all the damaged containers on January 18, 1991, after the ship docks in the harbor in New York City. The sources will remain on the ship and, after being placed in overpacks, will continue on their route to the final destination in Houston, Texas.

The New York State's Bureau of Radiation Protection, Albany, and the City of New York, Department of Public Health, have been informed of the status.

CONTACT: Ronald R. Bellamy
346-5200

Keith D. Brown
346-5048

9101240106 910118
PDR I&E
PNO-I-91-7B PDR

1042
d/c/E-34

DISTRIBUTION:

OWFN
Chairman Carr
Comm. Rogers
Comm. Curtiss
Comm. Remick

MNBB
AEOD
IRM
OIG

L-St.
PDR

NL
RES

Mail: ADM:DMB
DOT

NRC Ops Ctr _____

CA EDO
OGC NMSS
GPA NRR
PA OE
SP

Phillips
ACRS

NSAC----

Regional Offices _____

EW
ASLAP