

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNI-9432

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:

Connecticut Resource
Recovery Authority
179 Allyn Street, Suite 603
Hartford, Connecticut 06103

Licensee Emergency Classification:

Notification of Unusual Event
 Alert
 Site Area Emergency
 General Emergency
 Not Applicable

Docket No.: 99990001

License No.: Not Applicable

Event No.: NONE

Event Location Code: MAT

SUBJECT: IODINE-131 CONTAMINATED WASTE DETECTED AT AN INCINERATOR
FACILITY

On May 18, 1994, the State of Connecticut's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) notified Region I that a substantial quantity of iodine-131 had been found in municipal waste collected in the Middletown, Connecticut area. The iodine-131 was discovered on May 18, 1994 when a Middletown Public works vehicle carrying the municipal waste triggered radiation alarms at the Connecticut Resource Recovery Authority incinerator facility located in Hartford, Connecticut. Facility operators performed radiation surveys using an ion chamber and reported radiation levels of 1.5 to 9 milliroentgen per hour at the surface of the vehicle. The DEP was immediately contacted by the facility operators. The vehicle was returned to the Middletown municipal garage. The DEP and local authorities responded and escorted the vehicle from the municipal garage to the North End Landfill in Middletown. The DEP performed radiation surveys with an Eberline Model RO2 (closed window) and found maximum exposure rates of 10 milliroentgen per hour. The vehicle was unloaded and the waste was surveyed. The DEP reported that they found one paper towel which appeared to be the original source of the contamination. The DEP measured a radiation exposure rate of 800 milliroentgen per hour on contact with the paper towel and 8.5 milliroentgen per hour at one meter. The DEP utilized a portable multichannel analyzer and determined that the contaminant was iodine-131. This determination was later confirmed via analysis using an intrinsic germanium detector and multichannel analyzer. The DEP and NRC estimated that the paper towel contained between 35 and 40 millicuries of iodine-131. The DEP reported finding contamination throughout the remainder of the waste load. The DEP believed that the contamination was spread by precipitation. Highly contaminated waste was placed in a shielded container and secured. The DEP was working to find a licensee who would accept the highly contaminated waste and hold it for decay. Moderately contaminated waste was placed in two dumpsters. The DEP secured the moderately contaminated waste at the landfill site and planned to hold it for decay. The DEP surveyed individuals who came into contact with the waste and found only minor contamination on protective shoe covers worn by the responders. Several of the responders wore thermoluminescent dosimeters (TLDs) and direct reading pocket ion chambers. The DEP submitted the TLDs to a dosimetry processor for evaluation.

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DCS No: 99990001940518

Date: May 20, 1994

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PN1-9432

The NRC telephoned the three commercial radiopharmacies located in the State of Connecticut and identified those medical licensees who had recently received therapy doses of iodine-131. There were only two doses of greater than 24 millicuries of iodine-131 dispensed by these radiopharmacies since May 4, 1994. Both of these doses were sent to a medical center in Springfield, Massachusetts. The NRC identified one dose of 150 millicuries of iodine-131 which was sent to a hospital in Bridgeport, Connecticut on April 22, 1994. The NRC attempted to contact this licensee on May 19, 1994 but was unable to speak with anyone associated with radiopharmaceutical therapy. The NRC will attempt to speak with the licensee on May 20, 1994. The NRC also assembled a list of licensees in the Middletown area who are authorized to possess iodine-131. The NRC is in the process of contacting these licensees.

The Region I Office of Public Affairs is prepared to respond to media inquiries.

This information is current as of 4:00 p.m. on May 19, 1994.

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