

July 29, 1993

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-93-031

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 II staff on this date.

Facility

Federal Express
Federal Express
(non-licensee)
Memphis, Tennessee

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: SOURCE LOST IN SORTING FACILITY

On July 29, 1993, Federal Express notified the NRC Operations Center that they had lost a 5.2 millicurie phosphorus 32 (P-32) source in their Memphis, Tennessee, package sorting facility. The P-32 was in 10 microliters of solution in a glass vial, inside a lead pig (2 inches in diameter, 4 inches in length), in a plastic container. The plastic container had been wrapped in outer packaging for shipment. Surveys of the facility, the aircraft, and the container from the aircraft, and surveys of the outer packaging showed no contamination. Searches have not yet located the source.

Licensee discovered that the source was missing on July 27 at 2:00 a.m., when the outer packaging arrived at the re-wrap location at the facility because the packaging was damaged.

Federal Express is in the process of determining if the package could have been processed in sections of the 200 acre building other than that for packages from California, where the package was originally picked up and flown to Memphis. If so, the other areas will be searched and surveyed.

The State was notified by Federal Express. Representatives of the State of Tennessee's Division of Radiological Health surveyed the facility on July 28 without success.

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