

February 23, 1983

NOTICE OF NON-ROUTINE EVENT INVOLVING AGREEMENT STATE OR  
AGREEMENT MATERIALS - 83-05

This Notice constitutes an early report of events occurring in an Agreement State of possible safety or public interest significance. The information presented is as initially received without verification or evaluation and is basically all that is known by State Agreements Program staff as of this date.

AGREEMENT STATE: New York  
FACILITY: Auburn Steel Company  
Auburn, New York  
SUBJECT: CONTAMINATION OF METALS PRODUCTION FACILITY

The Auburn Steel Company, Auburn, New York, manufactures steel rods for concrete reinforcement. The rods are made by melting a "charge" of steel, which is "ladled" into a casting machine for continuous casting of the rods. A level gauge using a sealed radioactive source and a radiation detector is used to assure that the level of steel in the casting machine is maintained at the proper level.

At approximately 1:00 p.m. on February 21, 1983, a "charge" was prepared from scrap steel for this process. When the "charge" was "ladled" into the casting machine, workers noticed that the level gauge was "going haywire". When the gauge continued to respond abnormally, the company Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) closed the shutter on the level gauge, which shields the radioactive source. When the radiation detector continued to respond, the RSO began to perform surveys with a geiger counter. He found that the rods produced from this charge had radiation levels of approximately 24 mR/hr at 3 feet, and that the "ladle", the casting machine, and the bag house used to trap airborne particles, were contaminated. The licensee has taken urine samples and nose wipes from workers who were present in the area to evaluate possible internal exposures, and is evaluating external exposures from time and distance information. The operation has been shut down and a consultant has been retained to assist in decontaminating the facility. The licensee has also contacted its suppliers of scrap steel to attempt to determine the source of the contamination.

The New York Department of Health, which is responsible for emergency response, was notified at approximately 6:00 p.m. on February 21, 1983. The New York Department of Labor, which licenses the level gauge at Auburn Steel Co., was notified at approximately 10:00 a.m. on February 22, 1983. The New York Department of Labor is planning to send an inspector to take offsite samples and evaluate offsite releases. A representative from the New York Department of Health is performing onsite surveys.

Region I was notified of this event by a newspaper reporter at approximately 9:00 a.m. on February 22, 1983.

8303280330 830315  
PDR STPRG ESGNY

CONTACT: Myu Campbell  
488-1246

PDR