

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PN1-9474

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:
Massachusetts General Hospital
Department of Radiation Medicine
Fruit Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

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

Docket No.: 030-00239
License No.: 20-03814-14
Event No.: NONE
Event Location Code: MAT

SUBJECT: IODINE-131 THERAPY PATIENT LEAVES HOSPITAL PRIOR TO MEETING REGULATORY CRITERIA FOR RELEASE

At approximately 5:30 p.m. on December 21, 1994, NRC Region I was notified by the Radiation Safety Officer (RSO) of the Massachusetts General Hospital, that a radiopharmaceutical therapy patient left the hospital prior to meeting the release criteria described in 10 CFR 35.75. The RSO stated that the patient was administered a therapy dosage of 150 millicuries of iodine-131 at approximately 3:30 p.m. on December 20, 1994. At approximately 1:30 p.m. on December 21, 1994, a member of the RSO's staff performed a radiation survey of the patient and determined that the exposure rate of 7.2 millirem per hour at a distance of one meter from the patient exceeded the maximum allowable exposure rate of 5 millirem per hour at one meter. The patient informed the RSO's staff member that she had a reservation to fly from Boston to Boca Raton, Florida at 4:50 p.m. that same day and was traveling on to Palm Beach, Florida. The patient was informed by the RSO's staff member that she would not be released that day but would probably be released on December 22, 1994. The RSO's staff member left the patient's room. At approximately 4:45 p.m., nursing staff from the patient's floor called the RSO's office to inform them the patient had left the hospital. The RSO called the Boston Airport in an attempt to speak with the patient and get her to return to the hospital. The RSO stated that he planned to contact the patient's personal physician and would attempt to locate the patient in Palm Beach, Florida. On December 22, 1994, the licensee reported that the State Police had determined that the patient failed to take her appointed flight on December 21, 1994, but instead spent the night alone in a hotel at the Boston Airport. The patient reportedly took an early flight from Boston on the morning of December 22, 1994. The licensee determined that the patient would have been releasable by 5 or 6 p.m. on December 21, 1994. The NRC believes that a person seated next to the patient during the 3-4 hour flight would not receive an exposure in excess of regulatory limits for members of the general public.

The NRC has notified the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Region I Office of Public Affairs is prepared to respond to media interest. This information is current as of 4:30 p.m. on December 22, 1994.

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PNO-I-94-074 PDR

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DCJ No: 03000239941221
Date: Dece,ber 22, 1994

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