

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-92-46A

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information has been confirmed by the licensee.

Facility:  
USA Material Technology Laboratory  
Watertown, Massachusetts  
Docket No. 50-47

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

Subject: (UPDATE) CONTRACT WORKERS OVERCOME BY CARBON MONOXIDE  
DURING DECOMMISSIONING OPERATIONS

The U.S. Army Material Technology Laboratory is a military installation which has on-going activities using licensed materials. The site includes a research reactor being decommissioned under its NRC-approved plan.

On the morning of August 6, 1992, during a cutting operation on the reactor tank involving a plasma torch, two support contractor workers working on a balcony above the operations area became incapacitated after exiting the area through the radiation control point. The workers were taken to a local hospital, treated, and released later that afternoon. The licensee performed sampling for radioactive contamination. No airborne radioactive material was detected. Emergency personnel from local fire and medical agencies, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Radiation Control and OSHA had responded to the scene.

Region I was informed on August 10, 1992, that blood tests identified the cause as carbon monoxide poisoning. Licensee testing identified the source of the carbon monoxide as a localized high concentration in the flow path of the air exhausted from the bottom of the tank, where the cutting operation was being performed, across the balcony, where the workers had been standing, to the intake for the building exhaust. The licensee will vent the air from the interior of the tank directly to the intake for the building exhaust. The effectiveness of the modified system will be verified before continuing operations. OSHA is continuing to monitor and make follow-up visits. No further action is contemplated by the NRC.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been notified.

Region I received notification of this occurrence by telephone from the licensee at 11:10 a.m., on August 6, 1992. This information is current as of 9:00 a.m. on August 11, 1992.

Region I is prepared to respond to media inquiries.

CONTACT: S. Holmes  
(215)-337-5390

0/1  
E-34

DISTRIBUTION:

QWEN

Chairman Selin\*\*

Comm. Rogers

Comm. Curtiss

Comm. Remick

Comm. de Planque

OCAA

OIP

MNBB

AEOD\*\*

IRM

OIG\*\*

Phillips

ACRS\*\*

OCA

EDO

OGC

NMSS

OPA NRR\*\* (Phone Verif: A. Byrdsong 964-1168 or 964-1166)

OE

OSP

Regional Offices \_\_\_\_\_

RI Resident Office \_\_\_\_\_

EW W

OIG

Licensee: \_\_\_\_\_

(Reactor Licensees)

Mail:

ADM:DMB

DOT:Trans on'y\*\*

NRC Ops Ctr\*\* \_\_\_\_\_

INPO\*\*

1:35 pm

NSAC\*\*

1:35 pm

\*\* General list for sending PN's by FAX

Region I Form 83

(Rev. June 1992)