Date: February 21, 1980

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-III-80-33A

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events 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 IE staff on this date.

FACILITY: Chmart Corporation, Cincinnati, OH, License No. 34-00639-03C

SUBJECT: SPILL OF CESIUM-137 MICROSPHERES IN RESTRICTED AREA

There was a spill of cesium-137 microspheres which resulted when a 100 millicurie cesium-137 source was penetrated during a drilling operation reported in PNO-III-80-33 on February 20, 1980.

An NRC, Region III (Chicago) inspector was dispatched to the site to conduct a special inspection. However, he was unable to get a flight into Cincinnati, Ohio on February 20, 1980 because all flights were cancelled due to severe fog conditions in Cincinnati. The next flight available would be the afternoon of February 21, 1980.

Information obtained this morning, February 21, 1980, from the licensee and the licensee's consultant physician, who is also an approved NRC medical consultant and therefore reliable, indicates that:

1. One of the persons in close proximity to the drilling operation showed no contamination internally as indicated by whole body count.

2. The other person was whole body counted after decontamination procedures and showed a total body burden of 2 to 5 microcuries of cesium-137 (maximum permissible total body burden is 30 microcuries). The consultant physician believes it to be external body contamination rather than a true body burden. Urine analyses are negative and fecal samples will be analysed on February 21, 1980 and reported to NRC, Region III when the results are available.

3. The source room and vestibule area have been decontaminated and wipe tests are negative.

4. The penetrated source has been bound in a plastic like substance to fix the contamination and prevent further spillage.

5. All contaminated materials, including the source, have been packaged for disposal to a licensed burial site.

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Based on this information, NRC, Region III concludes that the incident is under control and in lieu of a special inspection at this time, will conduct an inspection of the entire licensee program in March, 1980 when the results of the fecal sample and the licensee report have been received. NRC, Region III will review the results of analyses, the licensee's report on the matter and, in particular, the procedures covering source handling operations.

To date no media interest has developed.

This information is current as of 10:00 a.m. February 21, 1980.

Contact: J. A. Pagliaro, 384-2518; A. B. Davis, 384-2510.

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