

Date: March 14, 1980

## PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PRO-III-80-48

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: Unknown Caller  
Chicago Area, IL

SUBJECT: ALLEGED STOLEN RA-226 IMPLANT NEEDLES

Region III (Chicago) in a conference call with the headquarters duty officer was informed by an unidentified caller that he had some radium he wished to get rid of. He said he bought the control device from a medical system which contained radium from a buddy that morning and he was now afraid of the radiation that he might be receiving. The caller correctly identified the radiation symbol on the outside of the device. He said he thought it contained 20 Curies of radium. He agreed to place the device in a local phone booth and call the duty officer and tell him the location.

The caller made two more calls. He said his buddy came with a geiger counter, and measured 60 millirems/hr. He did not state the distance at which this level was measured. He said that the device was actually a case in which there were two 3 Cm long stainless steel gold tipped needles each containing 10 milligrams of radium-226. He said his buddy had worked around medical equipment and had taken the material. The caller said since his buddy had agreed to take the material off his hands again he was going to drop the matter. Although the caller indicated he lived in the Chicago area he did not reveal his identity or address.

The NRC regional office maintained continual contact with the Illinois State Emergency Services and Disaster Agency and the State Health Department during the two hour period of the calls.

This morning the Radiation Safety Office from the Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis, Indiana called Region III and stated that at 8:30 p.m. CST last night an individual called him and asked him to describe a radium needle and likely radiation levels around such a needle. The individual then stated that he was handed a case with radium needles in a gas station in southern Indianapolis. The individual said he had called the NRC and he was going to leave the case in a gas station in Indianapolis.

This incident may be a hoax. The description given the NRC by the caller during the third call was identical to that given by the RSO to his caller. Furthermore there is now a discrepancy between southern Indianapolis and the south Chicago area in which the caller said he was located.

Region III is not aware of media interest at this time but since Chicago city and Illinois state police were alerted by the state, the story may reach the media. Region III does not plan a press release. The States of Indiana and Illinois have been notified.

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Region III received initial notification of this incident at 7:30 p.m. CST on March 13, 1980. This information is current as of 9:00 a.m. CST, March 14, 1980.

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