

September 18, 1998

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-98-041

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 Region II staff in Atlanta, Georgia on this date.

Facility

Southern Aluminum Castings
Bay Minette, Alabama

Licensee Emergency Classification

Notification of Unusual Event
Alert
Site Area Emergency
General Emergency
X Not Applicable

Subject: CONTAMINATED MAGNESIUM SCRAP

On Thursday, September 17, 1998, Alabama Office of Radiation Control informed the NRC that on September 14, 1998, Southern Aluminum Castings in Bay Minette, Alabama had discovered contaminated magnesium scrap, smelter dross and finished products at their site. It was determined that the magnesium thorium scrap had been purchased from Powercon Services, Inc. (a scrap broker). All but approximately 500 of the original 6900 pounds of the scrap had been smelted before the discovery of the contamination. Additionally, Southern Aluminum Casting identified 2,000 pound castings that were contaminated. This material had originally been shipped as dross to Smelter Service Corporation in Mt. Pleasant, TN, processed, and returned.

Representatives from the State of Alabama visited the site on September 15, 1998, and described the scrap as large metal concave disks. The material was analyzed by the State of Alabama personnel who found gamma exposure levels of up to 1.0 to 1.5 mr/hr max on contact with no detectable removable contamination. The castings were also surveyed and found to have levels of 22 microR/hr. The material is currently being controlled at the facility.

The State of Alabama continues to follow up on the origin of the material. Alabama contacted the State of Tennessee who sent two representatives to Smelter Service Corporation in Mt. Pleasant, TN for investigation and surveys.

The State of Georgia and EPA were informed.

The NRC received initial notification of this event by Thursday from the State of Alabama at 1:00 p.m.

This information is current as of 2:00 p.m. on September 18, 1998.

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