

September 29, 1998

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE

F.NO-IV-98-046

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 IV staff in Arlington, Texas on this date.

Facility

Materials Testing & Inspection, Inc.
Materials Testing & Inspection, Inc.
Idaho Falls, Idaho
Dockets: 03033699
License No: 11-27504-01

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: UNSECURED TROXLER MOISTURE/DENSITY GAUGES
(Event Number 34843)

On September 27, 1998, the Department of Energy (DOE) contacted the NRC Operations Center regarding an incident in Idaho Falls, Idaho. DOE representatives indicated that at 1:34 p.m. (MDT) on September 27, 1998, the Idaho Falls fire department contacted the Idaho Emergency Operations Center requesting radiological assistance. Fire department personnel reported that boxes with radioactive material markings had been observed in a private residence garage. A radiological assistance team was dispatched from the DOE, INEEL at

3 p.m. At 3:15 p.m., the team found two large, unlocked transportation containers (Department of Transportation Specification 7A) at the specified residence. Both containers held Troxler moisture/density gauges. One gauge was Troxler Model 3430, and the other was a

Model 3440. One gauge was labeled as containing a 10 millicurie cesium-137 source and a 50 millicurie americium-241 source, and the second contained a 8 millicurie cesium-137 source and 40 millicurie americium-241 source. Contact radiation levels on the two gauges were 7 and 10 milliroentgen per hour. The state of Idaho also reported to the scene after state representatives were summoned by the Idaho Falls police department.

A representative from the gauge licensee, Materials Testing and Inspection Inc., arrived at the scene and subsequently transported the gauges to the licensee's storage location in Idaho Falls at about 4:45 p.m. There was television coverage of the incident by two local television stations on September 27, 1998.

Region IV discussed the event with the licensee on September 27 and 28, 1998, and confirmed that the licensee had secured the gauges. Region IV plans to schedule an inspection.

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The state of Idaho has been informed. Region IV received notification of this occurrence by telephone from the NRC Operations Center September 27, 1998, at 6:15 p.m. Region IV has informed NMSS.

This information is current as of 2:00 p.m. CDT, September 28, 1998.

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