

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-86-41A (UPDATE)

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 the Region I staff on this date.

Facility: Swatch Watch, USA, Inc.
New York, New York
(D/N 030-20570)

Licensee Emergency Classification:

☐ Notification of Unusual Event
☐ Alert
☐ Site Area Emergency
☐ General Emergency
☒ Not Applicable

SUBJECT: DISTRIBUTION OF WATCHES CONTAINING TRITIUM

On June 12, 1986, NRC Region I issued a Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL) documenting Swatch Watch's commitment to cease all distribution of watches containing radioactive material. This action was taken based on information furnished to the NRC by Swatch Watch that they did not have a license to possess or distribute these watches.

Later on June 12, 1986, Swatch Watch informed Region I that the watches were actually being imported by a sister company, Hamilton Watch Co. of Lancaster, Pa., under possession license No. 37-03572-06 and distributed under distribution License No. 37-03572-08E. This was confirmed by letter on June 13, 1986. Therefore, Swatch was not required to be licensed by NRC for these activities. Upon receipt of certification that certain conditions of the Hamilton licenses had been met, and that the quantity of tritium in each watch was below regulatory limits, Region I agreed to allow Swatch Watch to resume shipments.

On June 17, 1986, Region I conducted an inspection of Hamilton Watch, and verified that the Swatch Watches were imported by Hamilton. However, the inspection also revealed that Hamilton had continued to import and distribute watches containing licensed material after the license authorizing these activities expired on March 31, 1984 and after having been informed of the license expiration. The licensee apparently remained in violation of NRC regulations until May 2, 1986, when distribution of watches was again authorized by amendment of an existing license. The watches distributed by Hamilton during the April 1, 1984 - May 2, 1986 period are believed to have contained licensed material quantities that were approved by both the previous and current licenses, and thus to involve no safety hazard to the public. The licensee is in the process of compiling records related to this issue and will provide copies to the Region I office. The inspection is continuing.

Region I has received some news media inquiries.

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the State of New York have been notified.

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