

June 3, 1998

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-98-031

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 III staff (Lisle, Illinois) on this date.

Facility
BRUCKER ENGINEERING LTD.
Brucker Engineering Ltd.
St. Louis, Missouri
License No: 24-32076-01

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

Subject: AUTOMOBILE CONTAINING MOISTURE DENSITY GAUGE FOUND AFTER 5 DAYS

On May 29, 1998, a Humboldt Scientific Inc., Model 5001 moisture density gauge, containing a nominal 10 millicuries (.37 GBq) of cesium-137 and a nominal 44 millicuries (1.63 GBq) americium-241/beryllium sealed source was locked in the trunk of an employee's personal automobile after completion of work at a temporary job site outside St. Louis, MO. The individual did not return the device to the licensee's facility for safe storage.

The licensee reported that the employee visited several bars and restaurants during the evening and apparently became intoxicated. He told his employer that he left his car in a parking lot.

The following day, May 30, the employee returned to the location where he believed the automobile to be parked but could not find his vehicle. He then informed his employer of the missing vehicle and gauge. The St. Louis County Police department was subsequently notified. The licensee subsequently notified the NRC on June 1, 1998, of the incident. The vehicle with the gauge intact was located on June 3, 1998.

A NRC Region III (Chicago) radiation specialist, in St. Louis for other inspections, was dispatched to the licensee's facility to review the circumstances surrounding the incident. After the vehicle was located the inspector assisted local authorities with a survey and inspection of the gauge. No damage was identified and radiation readings were normal for the gauge. Brucker Engineering, Ltd., has taken possession of the gauge. NMSS and the Missouri Department of Public Health have been notified. The information in this preliminary notification has been reviewed with licensee management.

There was local news media interest.

This information is current as of 11:30 a.m. on June 3, 1998.

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