

August 27, 1997

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-97-070

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
RIVERVALLEY LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
River Valley Local School District
Marion, Ohio
License No: NON-LICENSEE

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

Subject: BURIED SOURCE OF RADIATION FOUND ON SCHOOL CAMPUS

On August 20, 1997, the Ohio Department of Health (ODH) notified the Region III (Chicago) office that the Department was performing surveys at the River Valley Schools, (middle and high schools) near Marion, Ohio. ODH and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) initiated radiation and chemical monitoring at the school site after becoming aware of an increase in reported cases of leukemia in the area. Soil and water samples were taken. The water samples did not identify any unexpected radiation levels, and the soil samples are still being analyzed.

The school site was a former Department of Army facility that stored and renovated heavy construction equipment. The site is near the former Scioto Ordnance Plant which was used during World War II for the production and storage of bombs and other ordnance. The schools were constructed in the 1960's. The former Department of the Army facility apparently did not hold any NRC/AEC licenses.

On August 25, 1997, ODH reported to NRC that a 1 millicurie radium-226 source was found in the high school chemistry laboratory. This source was not registered with ODH as required but does not pose a significant radiological problem as it was properly shielded and secured.

Direct radiation surveys of the school grounds identified an area with elevated readings of 5 millirad/hour at the ground surface. This area is located approximately 100 feet from the school buildings. The isotope and physical form of the buried radiation source have not yet been determined. The location of the elevated radiation level was marked by the state agency pending further action.

The state agency has indicated there is no apparently connection between the area with elevated radiation levels and the increased incidence of leukemia among former students. The State has not asked for Federal assistance in this matter.

ODH issued an adjudication order to the school district on August 25, 1997. The order requires the district to license or dispose of the radium source found in the chemistry laboratory and to remediate the buried source of radiation on the school property.

There has been area news media interest in this situation.

IDEA-5-1 operating
expenses

IE 34 0/1

NMSS and OSP have been notified.

This information is current as of 11:00 a.m. (CDT) on August 27, 1997.

Contact: JAMES LYNCH
(630)829-9651

ROLAND LICKUS
(630)829-9660