

PDR in Vallecitos

per J. Rathje

JWB

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

August 31, 1978

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-78-159

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of an event of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information presented is as initially received without verification or evaluation and is basically all that is known by IE staff on this date.

Facility: General Electric Company
GE Test Reactor (GETR)
Pleasanton, California
Docket No. 50-70

Subject: TRITIUM IN GROUNDWATER NEAR VALLECITOS SITE

Four members of the Region V staff attended a meeting yesterday (August 30) in Oakland called by the San Francisco Bay Region Water Quality Control Board to discuss their sampling results showing elevated tritium levels in groundwaters near General Electric Company's Vallecitos Nuclear Center. GE routinely releases tritium originating at its General Electric Test Reactor (GETR) to the Vallecitos Creek. The company has continued to process a backlog of tritiated water despite the shutdown of the reactor since last October.

At the meeting, representatives of various county, state and Federal agencies (NRC, EPA and USGS) discussed the Regional Water Quality Control Board's sampling program. Of particular concern was a shallow well near the Vallecitos site, which had increased in tritium concentration from 7,000 pCi/litre in December 1977 to 30,000 pCi/litre in May to 50,000 pCi/litre in June. Subsequent samples by GE in July and August showed no detectable levels. Some other sampling locations in the area showed above background concentrations of tritium, but were generally less than the EPA drinking water standard of 20,000 pCi/litre. GE releases of tritium in recent months have been less than one percent of the allowable under Part 20.

The RWQCB and the California Health Department agreed to additional studies of the well and the hydrology of the area. GE agreed to continue sampling the well in cooperation with the RWQCB.

Considerable media interest is evident in the Bay Area. Neither NRC, nor GE plans to issue a press release, but are responding to media inquiries along with the RWQCB.

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Region V received a telephone call from the RWQCB requesting their attendance at the meeting on August 23. A copy of a RWQCB report of sampling results were received by mail in Region V on August 28.

Contact: LCunningham, FFMSI x28188 LBHigginbotham, FFMSI x28098

Distribution: Transmitted H St 4:38

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