

December 8, 1975

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE --PN-75-146

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events 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 OIE staff as of 10:00 a.m. on the date of this notification. IT SHOULD BE SPECIFICALLY NOTED THAT THIS NOTIFICATION MAY CONTAIN INFORMATION THAT LATER MAY BE DETERMINED TO BE INACCURATE OR INCONSISTENT. AN OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT NOTIFICATION OF AN INCIDENT OR OCCURRENCE (BLUE SHEET) SUBSEQUENTLY WILL BE ISSUED IF WARRANTED.

Facility: Suburban Publishers
Division of Jewelcor Distributors
West Pittston, Pennsylvania

Subject: Fire Involving Polonium 210
Static Eliminators

The 3M company reported to Region I on Friday, December 5, at 4:00 p.m. that the Suburban Publishers, West Pittston, Pennsylvania, printing building had been burned to the ground, and that two generally licensed 3M static eliminator bars were lost in the fire. The bars totaled 50 millicuries of polonium-210.

Region I contacted Suburban personnel on December 5, and learned that the fire occurred on November 28-29 and the area is under security guard. A Region I inspector arrived at the scene on December 6 and learned that four Po-210 bars (nominally 25 millicuries each) were involved. Surveys indicate no contamination outside the secured area; however, within the secured area, surveys were hampered by three feet of debris and one foot of water. The inspector found one bar undamaged, and located but was unable to retrieve a second bar in an area where the fire was not hot enough to melt the bar. The other two bars were in an inaccessible area where the possibility of melting existed. Region I will remain in contact with Suburban personnel until the status of all the radioactive material is determined.

Media interest is not expected. The State of Pennsylvania has been and is being kept informed. A press release is not planned.

OIE received notification of this occurrence by telephone call from 3M company on December 5, at 4:00 p.m.

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Transmitted: P Bldg 2:45 pm; H St 1:05 pm; MNBB 1:10 pm; Luge mc

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