

June 22, 1998

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE

PNO-IV-98-027

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 IV staff in Arlington, Texas on this date.

Facility

Radiographic Specialists, Inc
Jet Weld (Fabrication Facility)
Houston, Texas

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: DAMAGED IRIIDIUM-192 RADIOGRAPHY SOURCE

On June 22, 1998, the Texas Department of Health (TDH) contacted the NRC Operations Center and informed the NRC that an iridium (Ir)-192 sealed source was damaged while performing radiography of a vessel at Jet Weld, a fabrication facility in Houston, Texas. The incident occurred on June 19, 1998, and was reported to TDH at 4:00 p.m. (CDT) on June 19, 1998. The initial report provided by the licensee's consultant indicated that a leaking source was discovered by licensee personnel.

Apparently, as radiography was attempted an energized welding lead was still attached to the vessel. As the exposure device was lowered into the vessel by crane, the guide tube came in contact with the vessel wall. Contact between the guide tube and vessel provided a current pathway and the Ir-192 sealed source and a portion of the guide tube melted. The radiographer subsequently placed the camera in a plastic bag and returned it to the licensee's facility. A consultant for the radiography company responded to the incident on June 19, 1998.

On June 22, 1998, the licensee's consultant subsequently reported to TDH that the source was "ruptured" and that contamination was identified on the radiographer's clothing and in two offices at Jet Weld. The radiographer's clothing was confiscated, and bioassays are planned for the radiographer. TDH inspectors are currently performing investigations at Jet Weld and the licensee's facility.

All information is current as of 11:00 a.m. (CDT) June 22, 1998.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence by telephone from TDH and the NRC Operations Center on June 22, 1998. Region IV has informed OSP and NMSS.

This information has been discussed with the state and is current as of 11 a.m. (CDT) June 22, 1998.

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