

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE

PNO-V:80-15

Date: 02/29/80

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 IE staff on this date.

Facility: General Electric Company
GETR
Vallecitos Nuclear Center
Pleasanton, California

Subject: DETECTION OF ELEVATED RADIOACTIVITY IN GROUND WATER SAMPLES
FROM AN ONSITE AREA NEAR GETR

While performing a routine inspection at the Vallecitos site, a radiation specialist inspector was informed by the licensee that above background contamination levels were detected in water from a soil test well near the General Electric Test Reactor (GETR) facility. The well is located near an underground radwaste tank farm. Sample results showed a tritium concentration of 2.4×10^{-7} uCi/ml, gross beta of 1.3×10^{-7} uCi/ml and gross alpha of 6.5×10^{-8} uCi/ml. The well sample was a special sample and not part of the licensee's routine environmental monitoring program. The sample was obtained on January 23, 1980. A repeat sample on January 28, 1980 yielded approximately the same results. The tritium and gross beta concentrations are a small percentage of restricted area MPC's. The alpha results are in question at this time. Samples taken from a sump of a concrete catch basin beneath the tanks showed tritium of 6×10^{-8} uCi/ml, gross beta of 1.4×10^{-6} uCi/ml and alpha less than 3×10^{-6} uCi/ml. The licensee believes that the most likely source of contamination is leakage and spills that have occurred in the area over the past. The licensee is presently emptying the underground tanks so they can be leak tested. Region V plans to collect independent samples for analysis on February 29, 1980 and will investigate the matter further.

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The Vallectios site has received intense public interest in the past and it is expected that media coverage of this situation will occur. The licensee intends to notify the Regional Water Quality Control Board of these results today, February 29, 1980. The Board recently reissued a temporary water discharge permit to the site after much controversy.

A Region V onsite inspector received notification of this situation from the licensee at 3:30 PM, February 28, 1980.

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