

February 8, 1977

NOTICE OF NON-ROUTINE EVENT INVOLVING AGREEMENT STATE OR
AGREEMENT MATERIALS--77-02

This NOTICE constitutes an early report of events occurring in an Agreement State 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 State Agreements Program staff as of 12:00 noon on date of this notification. IT SHOULD BE SPECIFICALLY NOTED THAT THIS NOTICE MAY CONTAIN INFORMATION THAT LATER MAY BE DETERMINED TO BE INACCURATE OR INCONSISTENT.

AGREEMENT STATE: New Mexico

FACILITY: United Nuclear-Homestake Partners Uranium Mill

SUBJECT: Broken Uranium Mill Tailings Dam

Personnel of the State Agreements Program, OSP, were notified by NMSS on February 8, 1977 of a report of a break in a uranium mill tailings dam in New Mexico. State officials confirmed the report. The break began on Saturday, February 5, 1977 when the tailings slurry pipe from the plant to the tailings pile broke and the effluent began to erode the dam. The licensee notified the State of the break on February 5. The breach expanded and eventually became 150 feet across by 70' deep. The entire tailings pond drained and spilled into vacant land covering an estimated 25 to 50 acres several inches deep. The spillage is entirely confined to property controlled by the licensee. The State sent investigators to the site. An article appeared in the Albuquerque Journal on February 8, 1977. The mill is currently shut down and the State is developing plans for approving restoration of the dam, reclamation of the spillage, and to assess long-term impact of the spillage (such as to ground water). There was no threat to the public health and safety as a direct result of the spillage.

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