

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE---PNO-V-85-32

Date: 05/29/85

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 Region V staff on this date.

FACILITY: TAMCO,
Division of U.S. Steel
Etiwanda, CA 91739
State of California Licensee

Emergency Classification
☐ Notification of Unusual Event
☐ Alert
☐ Site Area Emergency
☐ General Emergency
☒ Not Applicable

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE MELTING OF GL GAUGE IN SCRAP STEEL

On May 22, 1985, a truck carrying toxic waste was stopped at the California Weigh Station going north on I-5 at Castaic, California. Newly installed radiation monitors detected radiation in the toxic waste cargo up to 6 mR/hr. The California Radiologic Health Branch was contacted and the truck was sent back to its point of origin, TAMCO, Division of U.S. Steel, Etiwanda, California, near San Bernardino, California. A California State radiation control inspector was dispatched to the steel mill on May 24, 1985. The operations were shut down and radiation surveys were conducted of the work areas, ducts, baghouse (filter house), stack, local environment and the steel product manufactured during the period in question. The only place where radiation was found was in the fly ash in the baghouse and fly ash which had been removed for disposal.

Soil and environmental samples were taken and analyzed by the State of California. The results indicated Cesium-137 (Cs-137) in the fly ash in the range of one nanocurie to 40 nanocuries per gram. The only external radiation appeared at the baghouse. Extrapolation indicates that possibly a radioactive gauge with from 200 to 500 millicuries was melted with the scrap steel.

Two maintenance employees will be whole body counted as they worked in the baghouse and with the fly ash during this period. There are no other indications of possible exposures. A contract health physics organization was on site May 25, 1985 for further analysis and to direct the cleanup. The plant is to remain down until the cleanup is completed, which is estimated to be two weeks. Closeout surveys will be done by both the contractor and the State of California. The contaminated fly ash is estimated to be about 100 tons which will be drummed and buried at the Hanford Low-Level Waste Site. The final report by both the State and the contractor will be forwarded to NRC. New monitors will be installed to check incoming steel.

NRC, Region V was notified by telephone on Friday, May 24, 1985 and updated by telephone on Wednesday, May 29, 1985

NRC Office of State Programs and NMSS have been informed.

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