

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 the staff on this date.

Facility: Department of the Army  
Rock Island, IL

License No. 12-00722-07

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Licensee Emergency Classification:  
\_\_\_\_ Notification of an Unusual Event  
\_\_\_\_ Alert  
\_\_\_\_ Site Area Emergency  
\_\_\_\_ General Emergency  
XX Not Applicable

Subject: FIRE IN SOUTH KOREA INVOLVING U.S. ARMY WEAPONS SIGHTS CONTAINING PROMETHIUM 147

On July 10, 1985, the U.S. Army notified Region III (Chicago) that a June 21, 1985, fire in South Korea had damaged spent military rocket systems containing radioactive promethium-147. (The Army holds an NRC license for the use of promethium-147 in the rocket sighting mechanisms.)

The fire occurred in a storage building at a Republic of Korea facility, located about 7 miles from Camp Humphreys, a U.S. Army base. Stored in the building were about 2,500 spent rocket tubes, each with a sighting mechanism containing 3 millicuries of promethium-147 for illumination.

South Korean military personnel notified the U.S. Army of the fire, and the Army dispatched its on-site radiation protection officer to the facility.

The promethium-147 is encapsulated in "microspheres" about the size of a pinhead. The fire released the microspheres from the sighting mechanisms, but air sampling and surveys inside the damaged building determined that the microspheres had remained intact. Promethium-147 microspheres were also found at three locations outside the building in areas where water used in fighting the fire had collected. These areas were promptly cleaned up. A U.S. based Army radiological response team has been dispatched to South Korea to clean up the building's interior. The cleanup is expected to be completed by July 13, 1985.

Region III will continue to monitor the Army's cleanup operations.

The NRC Office of International Programs has been notified.

Region III was notified of the incident on July 10, 1985, and additional details were obtained on July 11, 1985. This information is current as of 11 a.m. (CDT), July 11, 1985.

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11/11/85

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