

December 18, 1996

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-96-075

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 III staff (Lisle, Illinois) on this date.

Facility  
ST. ANTHONY'S HOSPITAL  
St. Anthony's Hospital  
Effingham, Illinois  
License No: STATE OF IL

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

Subject: EXCESSIVE RADIATION LEVELS ON SHIPMENT OF BRACHTHERAPY SOURCES

On December 16, 1996, St. Anthony's Hospital, a State of Illinois agreement state licensee, received two packages containing cesium-137 brachytherapy sources from Davies Medical Center in San Francisco, California. The shipper was Boart Longyear/CPN.

The hospital performed radiation surveys on the packages and found elevated radiation levels at the surface of one of the two packages. The licensee notified the Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety (IDNS) which dispatched two health physicists to the hospital. The state inspectors surveyed the package with an ion chamber detector and found radiation levels of 250 millirem per hour. The state and federal limit for radiation levels at the external surface of a package is 200 millirem per hour.

On December 17, the hospital received the third and final package in the shipment of the brachytherapy sources. The licensee's survey showed radiation levels of 400 millirem per hour at the surface of the package. IDNS has notified the State of California of the incident. The shipper has retained a consultant who will open all three packages at the hospital on December 18. IDNS will observe the opening of the packages to determine the cause of the elevated radiation levels.

IDNS notified the NRC of this incident at 5:30 p.m. on December 16. This information is current as of 3 p.m. on December 17, 1996.

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*ID&R-5-1 operating experience*  
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