

December 23, 1996

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-I-96-094

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 I staff in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania on this date.

Facility

Amersham
Amersham
40 North Avenue
Burlington, Massachusetts 01803
Dockets: 03029300 License No: 20-1283601

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: IRIDIUM-192 RADIOGRAPHY SOURCE IN ALGERIA UNABLE TO BE TRACED

On December 20, 1996, Amersham Corporation (Amersham) reported to the NRC that they are unable to confirm the whereabouts of a shipment containing a 108-curie iridium-192 radiography source that was shipped to Algiers, Algeria. The source was purchased by Bechtel International for use in Algiers. However, shortly after the source was shipped, Bechtel International closed its operations in Algiers and left the country of Algeria. The source was shipped by Amersham from their facilities in Burlington, Massachusetts, on November 14, 1996, in a Model 650 source changer, with a Yellow-III label on the package. The source was shipped by Federal Express to London, England. The source was confirmed by Amersham to have left London on a direct flight to Algiers on November 23, 1996 via Air-Algeria and the flight was confirmed to have arrived safely. When Amersham became aware that the customer was no longer in Algiers, they attempted to determine if the package was still at the airport in Algiers or if delivery had been attempted. Amersham has not been able to reach anyone at the airport or in the offices of Air-Algeria. Efforts to locate the source have also been made by Federal Express, by Air-France which works with Air-Algeria, and by the Marseille, France, office of Bechtel International. Amersham continues to call Air-Algeria every morning.

The incident was reported to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and to the NRC Office of International Programs. The Region I Office was notified of this event by the licensee at 3:30 p.m. on December 20, 1996.

This PN is current as of 9:30 a.m., December 23, 1996. Region I Public Affairs is prepared to respond to media inquiries.

Contact: Betsy Ullrich
(610)337-5040

Pam Henderson
(610)337-6952