

December 24, 1996

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-IV-96-072

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 IV staff in Arlington, Texas on this date.

Facility

B. J. Services Company, U.S.A.

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P.O. Box 4442

Houston, Texas 77210

Dockets: 03019037 License No: 42-19649-01 X Not Applicable

Licensee Emergency Classification

Notification of Unusual Event

Alert

Site Area Emergency

General Emergency

Subject: MISSING NUCLEAR GAUGE CONTAINING CESIUM-137

On December 23, 1996, the licensee's radiation safety officer (RSO) provided telephonic notification to the Region IV, Arlington, Texas, office that the licensee was missing one of its nuclear gauges containing cesium-137. The licensee possesses nuclear gauges which are used as a component of a slurry density measurement system for controlling the density of cement and/or hydraulic fracturing fluids pumped into natural gas or oil wells during well servicing. On December 20, 1996, the licensee was transporting a Texas Nuclear Model 5192 nuclear densitometer back from a temporary job site location near Gillette, Wyoming. The device contained approximately 100 millicuries of cesium-137 as a sealed source. The device was mounted (bolted and welded) on a 2-inch pipe, approximately 4 foot long, which was placed on a pipe rack attached to the outside of the vehicle. While transporting the device, the vehicle's rear tire experienced a blow-out which, in turn, damaged the vehicle's fender. After stopping the vehicle, the driver called for assistance to replace the tire. Immediately after replacing the tire, the driver returned to the licensee's office location in Gillette, Wyoming.

Upon arriving at the licensee's facility, the driver noted that the device was missing. Assuming that the device, and the pipe that it was attached to, was likely thrown from the vehicle when the fender was damaged, the driver returned to the site to locate the device. Due to the snow conditions at the site, the licensee was unable to visually locate the device. The licensee attempted to locate the device using a GM-type radiation detection instrument but has been unsuccessful.

On December 23, 1996, after failing to locate the device, licensee personnel from the Gillette location contacted the licensee's RSO located in Houston, Texas. The RSO has dispatched, via over-night mail, a micro-R meter to the Gillette location to aid with the search. The RSO has stated that the radiation dose rate from the device was measured as 0.1 milliroentgens per hour at 1 meter as noted from a review of shipping documents used to describe the device during transport.

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The licensee expects to receive the micro-R meter on the morning of December 24, 1996, and will continue to search for the device.

The state of Wyoming has been informed. Region IV will continue to monitor the licensee's response.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence by telephone from the licensee's radiation safety officer at approximately 3:00 p.m. (CST) on December 23, 1996. Region IV has informed NMSS.

The information herein has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 4:30 p.m. on December 23, 1996.

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