

February 5, 1997

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-97-007

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	Licensee Emergency Classification
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY, ROCK ISLAND, IL	Notification of Unusual Event
Department Of The Army	Alert
Rock Island, Illinois	Site Area Emergency
License No: 120072206	General Emergency
	X Not Applicable

Subject: MISSING DEVICES AND CONTAMINATION EVENT AT ARMY FACILITIES

As a result of ongoing routine inspection activities by Region III (Chicago) beginning January 27, the licensee made a series of four event notifications to the NRC Operations Center. These notifications had not been made, as required, when the incidents occurred. The events include lost or missing devices containing NRC-licensed material and contamination incidents.

NRC-licensed activities conducted under these licenses by any military installation are coordinated and supervised by the licensee's facility in Rock Island, Illinois.

Lost or missing devices containing NRC licensed material:

- Chemical Agent Alarms, each containing a sealed source of americium-241 (9.25 megabecquerels or 250 microcuries), Ft. Irwin, CA, November 23, 1995, and June 16, 1996. One device was disposed of in a landfill at the base; the other has not been traced.
- Chemical Agent Alarm, containing a sealed source of americium-241 (9.25 megabecquerels or 250 microcuries), Ft. Carson, CO, September 3, 1996. Device was disposed of in a landfill at the base.
- Muzzle Reference Sensor containing tritium gas, (370 gigabecquerels or 10 curies), missing in training area at Ft. Knox, KY, on October 13, 1994.
- Muzzle Reference Sensor containing tritium gas, (370 gigabecquerels or 10 curies), missing in training area at Ft. Drum, NY, on July 28, 1996.
- Muzzle Reference Sensor containing tritium gas, (370 gigabecquerels or 10 curies), missing in training area at Ft. Riley, KS, on December 6, 1995.
- M140 Alignment Device containing tritium gas, (111 gigabecquerels or 3 curies) that was lost at Ft. Irwin, CA, and reported to the licensee on May 30, 1996.
- On April 22, 1996, the licensee was notified that a Chemical Agent Alarm was found to be missing its source of americium-241 (9.25 megabecquerels or 250 microcuries) at Ft. Hood, TX. The licensee is tracking the serial number of the missing source to determine the present location of the source.

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Contamination Events:

-- On March 31, 1995, the licensee was notified that a locker contaminated with tritium was identified at the National Guard facility at Camp Dodge in Johnson, IA. The licensee reported that the locker was subsequently decontaminated.

-- On May 18, 1995, the licensee was notified about a contamination event that occurred at Ft. Leonard Wood, MO. The close out survey of a building where equipment had been stored indicated removable tritium contamination (148000 dpm). The building was subsequently decontaminated.

In addition, the licensee made a timely report of a contamination event which occurred at Ft. Bragg, NC, on February 3, 1997. Two M137A1 fire control devices were undergoing repair in the optical maintenance area. When one of the devices was opened, a nearby tritium air monitor alarmed. The area was locked to prevent entrance. The individuals took removable contamination wipes of the two devices and from two work benches, the wall exhaust fan, the wall surfaces, the telephone, and the door knob at the entrance to the area. The counting results indicated 3,000,000 dpm from one device and 9600 dpm from the other device; 2500 dpm from the exhaust fan, 1000 dpm from a bench, 167 dpm from the door knob, and all other wipes were less than the licensee's 100 dpm action level. The licensee doubly bagged the two devices and stored them in the radioactive waste storage area and completed decontamination of the maintenance area. The licensee obtained bioassay samples from the three individuals that were in the area. The bioassay results are expected on Wednesday, February 5, 1997.

The licensee has contacted the commanders of all the bases where these events occurred to ensure that these individuals are aware of the event that occurred under their command.

The Region III inspection of the licensee's activities is continuing. The failure to report the events on a timely basis will be reviewed for appropriate enforcement action. Region III has suspended all current licensing actions for the licensee.

Region III has contacted NMSS and Regions I, II, and IV; and the Illinois Department of Nuclear Safety. The other affected states will be notified. These events were reported to the NRC Operations Center on January 31, February 3, and February 4. The information contained in this Preliminary Notification is current as of 11 a.m. (CST) on February 5, 1997, and the licensee's Radiation Protection Officer has concurred with this information.

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