

November 12, 1996

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-96-068

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
FT. BRAGG, NC
Ft. Bragg, Nc
FT. BRAGG
North Carolina
License No: 12-00722-06

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

Subject: NOTIFICATION OF DAMAGED TRITIUM SOURCE AND CONTAMINATION OF FACILITIES

On November 8, 1996, the licensee notified the NRC Operations Center that at least one tritium source had been damaged at its facilities in Ft. Bragg, NC. The sources, each containing 800 millicuries (29.6 GBq) of tritium, were used on a mortar for range indication. On November 7, 1996, a soldier at Ft. Bragg noticed that the range indicator handle on his mortar was damaged. According to Army procedure, the soldier bagged the entire mortar and took it to the base maintenance shop for disposition. The maintenance shop refused to accept the mortar and directed the soldier to remove the range indicator himself. According to initial information received from the licensee's point of contact at the Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois, the soldier attempted to remove the range indicator handle from the mortar, which resulted in either the initial or further damage to one or more of the tritium sources. The licensee dispatched a Health Physicist to Ft. Bragg to gather further details and determine the circumstances of the incident.

Initial surveys conducted on November 7, 1996, identified contamination in the area of the mortar of approximately 50,000 disintegrations per minute (dpm). Wipes of the source indicated contamination in the millions of dpm. The licensee restricted access to the room where the source(s) is believed to have been broken and has initiated decontamination efforts. Bioassay samples have been taken from both of the soldiers who were in the room at the time that the source(s) is believed to have been broken. Results of those samples are not known at this time. The annual limit on intake for tritium is 80 millicuries (2.96 GBq). This Preliminary Notification will be updated when further details are available.

Region II and NMSS have been informed. Region III has asked the Region II Agreement States Officer to contact the State of North Carolina. Region III will monitor the licensee's followup activities and determine the appropriate course of action based on the results of the bioassay samples taken.

The information in this Preliminary Notice has been reviewed with the licensee and is current as of 10:00 a.m. on November 12, 1996.

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