

February 14, 1997

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-IV-97-010A

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.

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Licensee Emergency Classification</u>
Sheffield Steel, Sand Springs, Ok	Notification of Unusual Event
Sheffield Steel, Sand Springs, Ok	Alert
Sand Spring, Oklahoma	Site Area Emergency
License No: 35-19883-01	General Emergency
	X Not Applicable

Subject: NUCLEAR GAUGE FOUND AT SCRAP YARD (UPDATE)

On February 11, an NRC inspector was dispatched from the Region IV office to the Sheffield Steel scrap yard at Sand Springs, Oklahoma, to determine the status of the gauge reported found in a load of scrap steel the previous day. The inspector found the gauge secured at the yard and initiated interviews of workers who may have worked near the device. The inspector confirmed that the gauge was labeled as containing 200 millicuries of cesium-137.

Region IV provided the serial number of the device to the manufacturer, Texas Nuclear (TN), who determined that the gauge was shipped to a general licensee, Somex, Ltd, in early 1981. TN provided the NRC with the licensee's address in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and stated that their records indicated that this was the only gauge they had shipped to Somex. When the inspector arrived at the designated address later on February 11, he found a large manufacturing plant undergoing dismantlement. Further discussions with the current owner, Zinc Corporation of America (ZCA), disclosed that dismantlement of this former vanadium processing plant was initiated last month and that multiple shipments of scrap steel have been forwarded to Twelfth Street Steel in Joplin, Missouri, as well as to Sheffield Steel.

ZCA committed to contact TN to arrange for packaging and shipment of the gauge for disposal. The NRC inspector performed survey measurements at the ZCA site and found no evidence of residual radioactive material. ZCA stated that they planned to procure a sensitive detector to perform further measurements at the site.

On February 13, the inspector performed a survey at the Twelfth Street facility in Joplin and did not detect radioactivity there. Interviews of personnel at this site are underway to determine if scrap materials from ZCA were forwarded from Joplin to scrap yards other than Sheffield. Region IV staff was able to locate an Oklahoma attorney who provided background information on Somex. The attorney stated that Somex was dissolved many years ago. He offered to contact the former plant manager of the Bartlesville facility and inquire in regard to whether gauges other than the one identified were installed in the facility. Both the attorney and a ZCA official stated that the facility has been idle since Somex closed the plant in 1981.

9702190113 970214
PDR I&E
PNO-IV-97-010A PDR

1E34
0/1

Region IV has provided updated information to NMSS, AEOD, and the state of Oklahoma.

Region IV received initial notification of this occurrence by telephone from Sheffield Steel at 11:38 a.m. CST, February 10, 1997. This information is complete as of 4:00 p.m. CST on February 13, 1997.

Contact: Charles Cain
(817)860-8186

Linda Howell
(817)860-8213