

November 21, 1996

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-96-070

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
S. C. JOHNSON AND SON, INC.
S. C. Johnson And Son, Inc.
Racine, Wisconsin
License No: 48-06453-01

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

Subject: MISSING DENSITY GAUGE SOURCE

On November 20, 1996, the licensee reported to NRC Region III (Chicago) that a 300 millicurie (11,100 MBq) americium-241 sealed source contained within its protective housing was identified missing after the device was removed from its process line. The housing's shutter, which shields the radiation source, is designed to close when power to the unit is turned off. Consequently, the missing device does not represent a significant external radiation hazard provided the protective housing is intact. The device, an Industrial Dynamics density gauge, was used for detecting the fullness of aerosol cans on an assembly line.

During the last week in August 1996, the gauge was taken off-line by a licensee employee in preparation for its return to the manufacturer. The device was placed in an unsecured area of the licensee's plant and subsequently sent to a scrap metal recycler because it was presumed by an employee to be scrap metal. The scrap yard rejected the gauge due to the radioactive labeling on the device's cover and returned it to the licensee's facility. The gauge was then taken apart at the licensee's facility for recovery of its stainless steel frame. The protective housing enclosure containing the sealed americium-241 source was separated from the rest of gauge and the licensee assumes that it was discarded in a trash dumpster and subsequently taken to a municipal landfill in Franklin, Wisconsin, in early October.

The licensee, upon discovery that the radioactive source may have mistakenly been disposed of to the normal trash, conducted searches of its facility and performed surveys of the dumpster area. The missing source was not located. The licensee confirmed that other radioactive sources in its inventory have been accounted for.

NRC Region III dispatched two inspectors on November 21, 1996, to the licensee's facility to review the circumstances of the event and conduct radiation surveys of the facility, landfill and recycler.

The State of Wisconsin and the NRC Office of Nuclear Material Safety and

Safeguards have been notified. The information in this preliminary notification has been reviewed with licensee management.

This information is current as of 9:00 a.m. (CST) on November 21, 1996.

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