

April 8, 1997

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-I-97-021

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 I staff in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania on this date.

Facility

Hewlett-Packard Company
Hewlett-Packard Company
Little Falls Center
2850 Centerville Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19808
Dockets: 03032792 License No: 0728762-01

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: LOSS OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL

On April 7, 1997 at 2:54 p.m., the licensee's RSO contacted the NRC Headquarters Operations Officer about a missing Electron Capture Detector (ECD) containing 15 millicuries of nickel-63 as a sealed source. The licensee subsequently contacted the State of Delaware and the NRC Region I office at 4:00 p.m. The licensee determined that the ECD was missing at 10:00 a.m. on March 24, 1997. The licensee conducted a review of the records and interviews of personnel, which indicated that the ECD had been received from the supplier (Amersham) on March 5, 1997, and placed in a safe for storage.

The Region I office contacted the licensee for additional information on April 8, 1997. The licensee stated that they had completed a search of the facility and waste bins. The licensee further stated that only the lower half of the ECD had been lost and has not been recovered.

The licensee described the ECD as being sealed in a cylindrical plastic container 2.25 inches by 1.5 inches in diameter. The container is grey with a white cap. The label on the container states "Nickel-63, 15 millicuries, Caution - Radioactive Material, and a yellow and red radiation caution symbol" (i.e., three-bladed foil). The label also contains the Amersham and Hewlett-Packard serial numbers but the licensee had information only on the Hewlett-Packard serial number (i.e., K4022). The lower half of the ECD is a cylinder about 1.75 inches long by 1.5 inches in diameter made of stainless steel and is unpainted. The lower portion of the ECD is etched with the radiation caution symbol, Ni-63, 15 millicuries, Caution - Radioactive Material, and SN K4022.

The State of Delaware has been notified. The Region I Public Affairs Office is prepared to address press inquiries. The NRC Region I office is continuing to follow-up on the licensee's efforts to recover the ECD. This notification is current as of 3:45 p.m. on April 8, 1997.

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