

March 14, 1988

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-88-21

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 the Region IV staff on this date.

FACILITY: Montana Resources, Inc.  
Missoula, Montana  
Docket: 30-020342

25-26809-01

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

SUBJECT: LOST CESIUM-137 SOURCE

Montana Resources, Inc. reported a lost cesium-137 source at their Butte, Montana, milling facilities (formerly operated by Anaconda Copper Mining). The missing source (Industrial Nucleonics SH 301 gauge, No. Cs 7011) was used as a slurry density gauge and had been initially installed in 1963 when it contained 20 mCi. The present source strength is estimated at 11 mCi. The licensee suspects that the source was lost on the off shift of July 15, 1987, when a section of pipe was removed that may have contained the gauge. It is theorized that the gauge was then placed in a scrap dumpster and was either placed in an onsite waste dump (which now has a 20 ft. dirt covering) or shipped to a scrap metal dealer. The licensee's activities were inspected by 2 Region IV inspectors on March 9, 1988.

Neither the licensee nor the NRC plans to issue a press release.

The state of Montana will be informed.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence by a telephone call from the licensee on February 24, 1988. The licensee also reported this incident by letter dated February 24, 1988. Region IV has informed NMSS.

CONTACT: Dale A. Powers, FTS 728-8195

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