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Leo G. Chelius, Alt. Grp. Ldr. H-1

February 29, 1952

James Oakes, H-1 Monitoring Section

SPILL AT TA-33

H-1 -M-10

VERIFIED UNCLASSIFIED

*Phil Long, ISD-66227*

On Thursday, February 21, 1952, at 3:30 P.M., Area 6, TA-33, on the second shot of the day, a polonium spill occurred. Unlike the first shot, which went off perfectly, the second, a cold shot (70° below zero), leaked profusely. I monitored the target after the shot and found it hot and leaking. During the same interval of time, Ed Little drove Brooklyn Betsy over to pick up the shot. A plastic bag was placed around the target, sealed, and carried off to the dump. After dumping the target, we found the hoist hot, over 20,000 c/m. When we returned to the shot area, we discovered that the whole area had increased its alpha count immensely. Also, our vehicles all had count, including the ones out past the area gate. Upon monitoring the area, we found counts above 20,000 to 1,000 as indicated by the map attached. The lunch room which TA-33 personnel use was contaminated as much as 2,000 c/m on the table which is used for eating. The wind, as indicated by the wind vane on the map, carried the fall out in a straight line back from the gun area, over the electronics shack, contaminating my vehicle E-28105, beyond the danger gate, almost to the TA-33 fence line near State Highway No. 4.

Having done a little survey work before 5:15 P.M., with incentive of a holiday the next day, Mr. Dougherty, W-3, and myself decided to close the area until Friday when we would complete a survey with recommendations. Before leaving it might be said that the Zia personnel had left before the spill occurred and that all the protective clothing was left in a pile which became covered with contamination. I decided to leave this clothing there rather than subject the TA-33 personnel to a radiation hazard, having decided to use 8105, the coldest of the vehicles, for transportation back to Tech Area.

Once back at the Tech Area I monitored the TA-33 personnel and dogs with the aid of Bob Barker, finding two people with high count on their shoes. Before allowing them to leave the Tech Area, I had them decontaminate their shoes with scouring powder in the x-ray room of the Monitoring Office. They left with a low count of 50 to 100 c/m on their shoes which initially had 10,000 to 20,000 c/m.

On Saturday following the holiday I returned to TA-33 and monitored the area, allowing me to complete the map attached with c/m locations. Dougherty discussed getting a truck to cover the area with oil covering the contamination.

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4653

FORMERLY RESTRICTED DATA  
Handle as Restricted Data in Foreign Dissemination

Per *L. P. Robinson* 1-14-65  
 (Person authorizing change in classification) (Date)  
 By *Edwin Hoffmeyer* 1-27-65  
 (Signature of person making the change, and date)

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BPILL AT TA-33 Page 2

H-1

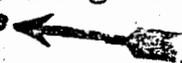
Dougherty decided not to have a shot Saturday afternoon, being leary of the wind conditions; I then returned to Tech Area leaving the contaminated clothes out at TA-33 because I had a clean vehicle which I again did not wish to contaminate.

Following the above spill and a discussion in Mr. Buckland's office with Mr. Buckland and Robert Barker, it might be recommended to TA-33 or monitoring personnel to use a handful of grease on the target to try and contain any of the polonium spills in the future. This would be done by stacking a gob of grease over the end of the target with the little hole in it. This would allow a slow leak to be contained in the grease, cutting the spill hazard immensely.

*J. Oakes* *6/28*

Jim Oakes  
Site Monitor

JO/eg

cc: J.E. Dougherty, W-3  
File 

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