

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL

ROUTING SHEET

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US Department of Energy
Carlsbad Field Office

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REMARKS: Urgent For your review Reply ASAP Please comment

Carlsbad, New Mexico



Response to Inquiry

TRUPACT-II Spot Contamination

December 15, 2000

- At approximately 7 a.m., December 14, a single swipe taken from the outer surface of the inner containment vessel lid of a TRUPACT-II at WIPP showed a higher than normal level of radioactivity.
- Ten swipes had been taken at the time the contamination was detected. Under normal conditions, a total of 30 swipes are taken of each TRUPACT-II.
- As a result of the contamination, a total of 49 swipes plus four large area swipes, covering the entire outer surface of the inner containment vessel lid, were taken and counted. No other swipes showed higher than normal levels of radioactivity.
- The TRUPACT was holding transuranic waste that arrived at WIPP December 14 from the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site in Colorado.
- Counting equipment indicated the surface of the 100-square-centimeter area of the swipe had approximately 200 disintegrations per minute (dpm) Alpha and 10 dpm Beta/Gamma. Disintegration per minute is the emission of radiation from the swipe.
- Decontamination of the area was unnecessary because the initial swipe removed all contamination. There was no contamination on the outside of the TRUPACT.
- The WIPP Radiochemistry Laboratory conducted radiochemical analysis to determine the swipe contained approximately 213 dpm of Plutonium and 30 dpm of Americium.
- Plutonium and Americium are transuranic elements...not naturally occurring.

- Waste processing activities were suspended until the area was confirmed clean. No other activity was found in the area, on personnel, or in the payload area of the TRUPACT-II. The contamination did not come from the waste in the TRUPACT – it attached itself to the inner lid from an unknown source at the Rocky Flats facility.
- CBFO has contacted Rocky Flats site to determine the source of the contamination.
- This incident reinforces the integrity of the meticulous waste handling procedures employed at WIPP.
- Waste handling activities resumed at approximately 11 a.m., December 14.
- There was no risk to personnel or the environment.
- The event did not violate regulatory requirements and, therefor, is not reportable.

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