

LOW-LEVEL RADIOACTIVE WASTE FORUM, INC.

**2657 Bayview Drive – Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33306
(754) 779-7551 * (754) 223-7452 FAX**

Northwest Compact/State of Washington

Small Radioactive Breach During Transport Process at Seattle Hospital *Thirteen People Decontaminated for Radiation Exposure*

On May 3, 2019, thirteen people had to be decontaminated for radiation exposure following an incident at the Harborview Medical Center Research and Training Building in Seattle, Washington.

Overview

According to a spokesperson for the Seattle Fire Department, a contract crew was moving cesium-137 from a lab in the Harborview Medical Center Research and Training Building to a truck when the substance spilled. The research building was evacuated after the spill.

Hazmat crews were called to the scene and found that 13 contract workers, custodial workers and others at the scene tested positive for radiation exposure and needed to undergo decontamination.

Although none of the workers showed any symptoms of radiation poisoning, five people were decontaminated and released, whereas eight of them were checked into nearby Harborview Medical Center for treatment and monitoring. No firefighters or Hazmat crews suffered any radiation exposure.

According to a Harborview Medical Center spokesperson, all of the patients were subsequently discharged. None of the patients showed immediate symptoms from the radiation exposure.

“HAZMAT team is on scene at Terrace St. and Terry Ave. for a small radioactive breach that occurred during the transport process of a substance from Harborview Hall,” tweeted the Seattle Fire Department. “No threat to general public, impacted area has been isolated ... Total of 13 people tested positive for exposure to radioactive material at Terrace St. All patients are undergoing decon and are asymptomatic at this time. Eight will be transported to Harborview. No threat to general public, breach contained.”

The operation to move the material was described as routine. "The contract workers that were hired to this, they are used to dealing with radioactive material, so having a breach

like this is very rare," stated the Seattle Fire Department spokesperson. She said the scene had been decontaminated and there was no threat to the general public.

Background

The Harborview Medical Center Research and Training Building is just east of the main hospital building. The incident occurred at a loading area in the rear of the building. The cesium-137 was being used at Harborview in the blood transfusion process.

Cesium-137 is used to irradiate blood, and in radiation therapy. It is also used in some industrial gauges. Cesium-137, which is water soluble, was widely spread by the nuclear accidents at the Chernobyl and Fukushima nuclear plants.

May 6, 2019

Todd D. Lovinger, Esq.
Executive Director
LLW Forum, Inc.
(754) 779-7551

The preceding information was provided to you on behalf of the LLW Forum, Inc. It may not be reproduced or distributed without the express written approval of the organization's Executive Director. To view other communications and documents of the LLW Forum, Inc., visit the LLW Forum's web site at <http://www.llwforum.org/>.