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Files

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FIRE IN A SYLVANIA SCRAP SHIPMENT TO MCW.

SYMBOL: PM:AMA

Mr. Brannigan of Health & Safety Division and the writer visited Bayside on January 8, 1954 to investigate the cause of the fire in a Sylvania scrap shipment to MCW at St. Louis. The persons contacted were H. Grieb, W. J. Donohue, and A. A. Gannon of Sylvania.

On December 23, 1953, Sylvania, Bayside, shipped 809 kgs. of uranium scrap which was identified on SF 101 Form No. 4 - SYL to MCW as uranium bar and oxide scrap.

On Saturday, December 26, 1953, MCW was notified by the American Railway Express Company that a crate of 12 cans of radio-active material from Sylvania was on fire in their downtown terminal. The fire was put out by the Express people. However, when it was received at MCW, one of the cans was still smoking. The contents of this can, according to MCW, was metal scrap in the form of rods, bars, and flat stock.

The number of the can which caused the fire was traced. Sylvania's shipping records indicated that the contents of this can was "bar stock". However, Mr. Donohue said this shipment contained some low density uranium scrap, preforms from SR flat plate program, and the can in question might have contained some low density material even though the shipping slip indicated "bar stock".

Mr. Grieb said that on or about December 23, 1953 a preform set in Mr. Gannon's office at Bayside caught fire and burned slowly. He stated that it was the first time they witnessed the actual burning of low density uranium metal. (The writer requested a report on the Sylvania incident.) A telephone conversation with Mr. Lidman, engineer in charge of the preform work, confirmed the same story.

After considerable discussion, it was concluded that the fire in the Railway Express Company terminal at St. Louis was caused by a low density metal in the can and probably was accelerated by the breakage and subsequent pulverization of weak preforms during handling and shipping.

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On the basis of the above conclusions, Sylvania was instructed to burn to oxide all scrap preforms before storage and/or shipment.

The Sylvania shipment was authorized by NYOO in a letter dated November 13, 1953 (G. A. Bate to A. A. Cannon). However, the amount of the shipment was doubled by Sylvania without our authorization and no prior notification of this shipment was sent to either this office or the consignee.

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