

REPORT OF UNIT CITATION

October 16, 1994  
Date

Hazardous Materials Co. #1

N/A

SOC

Unit

Battalion

Division

1. 709 Manhattan 10/4/94 2139  
 Box Borough Date Time  
 2200-0200 hrs 10/4/94  
 Time of Act Date

2. MEMBERS RESPONDING

RANK	NAME	UNIT	ASSIGNED UNIT
Lt.	Stan Ryback	Haz-Mat 1	SOC
FF.	Philip McArdle	"	"
"	John Olewnicki	"	Haz-Mat 1
"	Dominic Tralli	"	"
"	Joseph Iovino	"	"
"	John Hack	"	"
"	Richard Smith	"	"
"	Ed Connelly	"	"

3. ARE ANY OF THESE MEMBERS BEING RECOMMENDED INDIVIDUALLY FOR MERITORIOUS ACT IN CONNECTION WITH THIS FIRE? no (If yes - list names)

4. LOCATION OF UNIT OPERATIONS:

a) If in building: Address Federal Express 534 west 34th Street

Height 4 story Area city block Construction brick

Occupancy garage Number of apartments in building n/a

Floor(s) 4 Room n/a

b) If not in building: Give complete descriptive information so that physical setting can be recreated.

5. PERSON(S) AIDED:

NAME	
ADDRESS	
AGE - SEX	
RESCUE BREATHING	
EXTERNAL CARDIAC MASSAGE	
RESUSCITATOR APPLIED	
HOSPITALIZED	
NAME OF HOSPITAL	
DIAGNOSIS	
LENGTH OF HOSPITALIZATION	

Haz-Mat 1  
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6. DESCRIPTION OF UNIT OPERATION:

Manhattan Box 709

At 2139 hours Hazardous Materials Company # 1 (Haz-Mat 1) was completing operations at a Brooklyn box when we were requested by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to respond with them, and assist the Department of Health (DOH) with a radiological incident in Manhattan. The Haz-Mat Officer (Lt. Rybak) notified Manhattan of the request by DEP and was assigned to Manhattan Box #709 along with a first alarm assignment. Upon our arrival at the scene (which was secured by the first due units), The Haz-Mat Officer and the Entry Team (FF's McArdle & Tralli) reported in to the Command Post and spoke to the Incident Commander (Deputy Chief McGowen, 3rd Division) and the 7th Battalion (BC Shoulin). The following information was ascertained in the briefing:

A package containing Radioactive Isotopes was delivered to New York Hospital @ 550 1st Ave. When the package was opened it was found to be damaged and presumed to be empty. The package was refused at New York Hospital and sent back to the Federal Express (FED-EX) facility @ 534 west 34th Street from which it came. A notification was made to the Board of Health by the Hospital; they responded and began the process of trying to find the missing sources. The Board of Health was having very little success at locating the sources and was concentrating on one bin where seven sources were found.

The first task of the Haz-Mat Officer was to isolate the facility. This was accomplished by getting the Board of Health to order the facility closed. This meant that no person or vehicle would be allowed to enter or leave the facility until radiological monitoring was accomplished. The Decon Team (FF's Olewnicki & Iovino) closed off all access control points to accomplish this task while the Entry Team began to identify & isolate grids that would have to be searched with radiological monitoring equipment.

The next task was to identify the product, its container and the product/container's environment. The Entry Team was able to ascertain that the product was indeed the radioactive isotope; "Iodine" (I-125) in the form of seeds, used for implantation in the treatment of cancer. Its biological half life was approximately 60 days. This product was a Beta / Gamma emitter. The actual radioactive material was small in size (0.5 mm X 3.0 mm.) to fit inside the sealed titanium casing. (see Diagram 1)

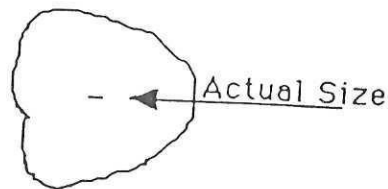


Diagram 1

6. DESCRIPTION OF UNIT OPERATION:

These casings consisted of the source sealed inside an area approximately 0.8 mm X 4.5 mm in size of titanium and welded at both ends (diagram 2).

There were exactly 85 of these seeds contained in a shrink wrapped, screw capped glass vial which is insulated in a sealed lead container, the bottle's size was similar to that of a medium size jar of pills received in a pharmacy (diagram 3). This lead container was placed in a fiber board box surrounded by packing material.

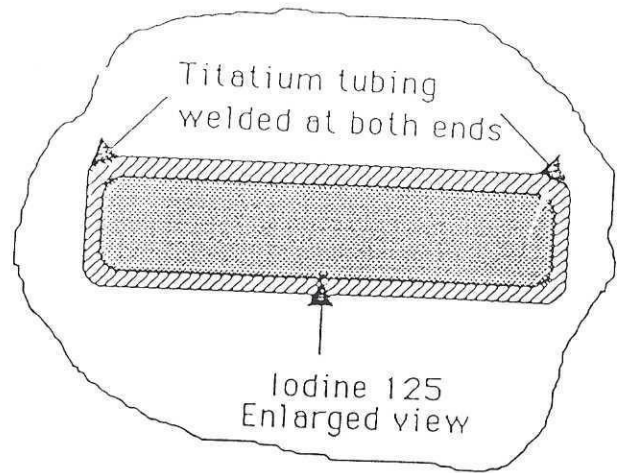


Diagram 2

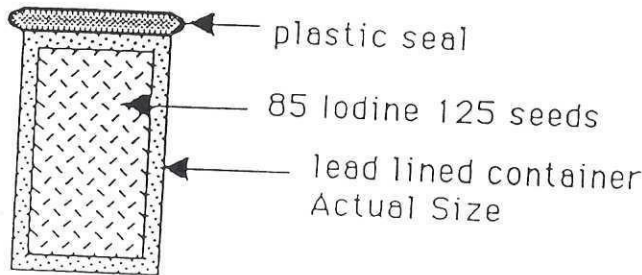


Diagram 3

Notifications had to be made because Iodine 125 is an accountable Radioactive Material that is strictly controlled. The Haz-Mat Officer and the Back-up Team checked FED-EX records and were able to trace the packages entire route. It's point of origin was Dublin, California. From there the package stopped at other FED-EX facilities in Schaumburg Illinois, Memphis Tennessee, and Newark New Jersey. It then came to FED-EX at 534 W 34 street, from there it was delivered to New York Hospital at 550 1st Ave, where it was refused and returned to FED-EX's facility at 34 street. The National Response Center, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were notified as well as the other FED-EX facilities about the possibility of the missing seeds being at these facilities. The Hazardous Materials Response Teams in Newark & Memphis were notified by the Resource Man (FF Smith) and asked to check out their FED-EX facilities. The Results were negative. This led to the assumption that the damage was suspected of occurring in New York.

In order to protect the first responders, workers and the public, personnel and vehicles that would be leaving the facility would have to be checked. Since first due units had not entered the facility it was decided by the Incident Commander, that these units could be released. Police units were told their services were not required. The Back-up Team (FF's Connelly & Hack) was assigned to isolate the employees and determine if there was any possibility of contamination. After checking each employee with negative results, these employees were escorted out of the building. Slowly we were reducing the number of personnel, until only the Incident Commander, Battalion 7, Haz-

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Haz-Mat 1

Unit

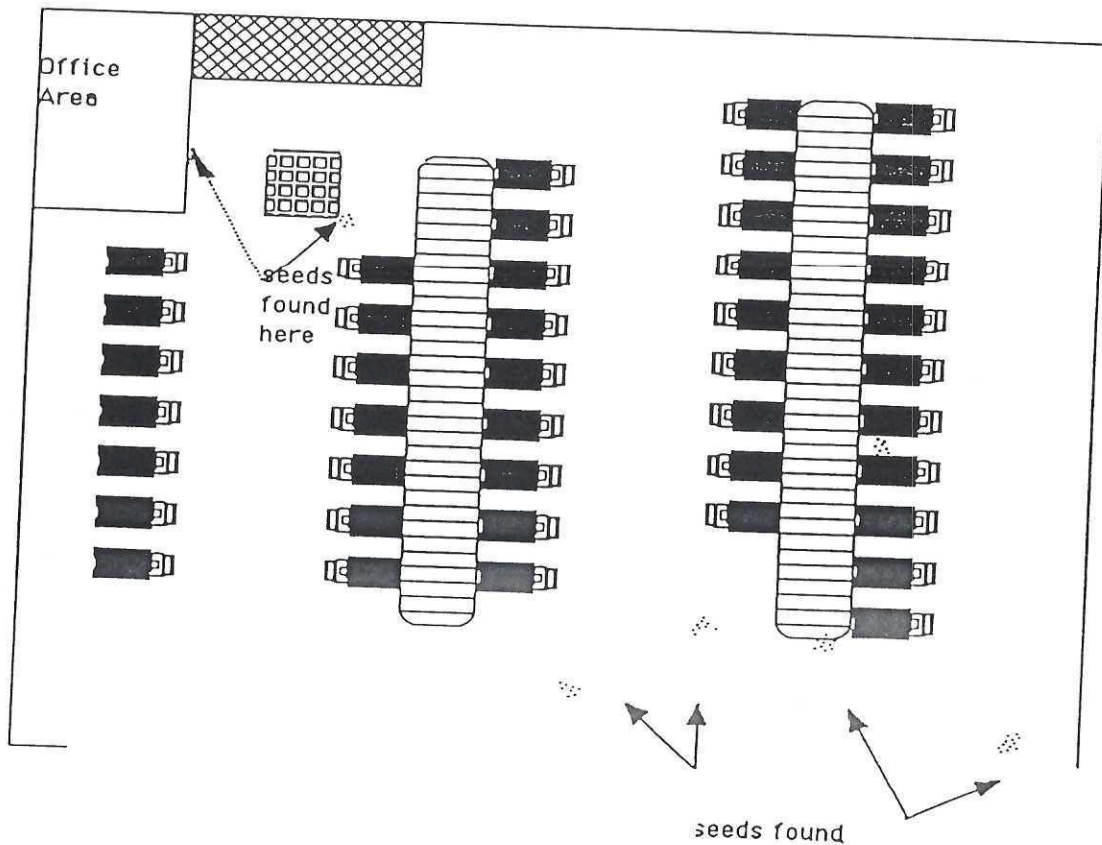
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6. DESCRIPTION OF UNIT OPERATION:

Mat, Health, DEP were in the building. A small police presence remained but was limited to 2 Captains who remained near a stairwell on the third floor where operations were being conducted.

The Haz-Mat Officer requested that the Board of Health allow Haz-Mat's personnel assist in the search for the seeds. The Board of Health (who were the city's experts in radioactive materials, had only found 7 sources in 2 1/2 hours work) knew they were going to need help and quickly agreed. The term "finding a needle in a haystack" an understatement for two reasons. First, a needle was four to five times the size of the seeds we were looking for. Secondly as many as two to three hundred haystacks could easily fit in the area that had to be searched. The Resource Man continued with notifications and documentation of the incident. The Entry, Back-up and Decon Teams (under the supervision of the Haz-Mat Officer) split up and began to search different grids that Haz-Mat had previously established. The Teams searched, finding seeds in several locations remote from the original site where 7 seeds were located. (see diagram 4)



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The seeds were found in storage areas, in the conveyor system, under vehicles, at work stations and labeling areas. In all Haz-Mat recovered 55 of the seeds. Several additional seeds were suspected of being damaged with release of the isotope into the packing material and the fiber board container, which was also recovered along with the shipping papers by Haz-Mat Personnel. After a thorough search of the facility that lasted approximately 4 hours the Health Department was confident that no more seeds remained on site. Additional seeds were also recovered at New York Hospital supporting Haz-Mat's conclusion that the release was confined to the New York area.

The members of Hazardous Materials Company #1 who operated at this box exhibited teamwork and competence when all others had practically given up. Because of their diligence, persistence and attention to detail, they brought this incident to a successful conclusion. It is for these reasons I respectfully request they be considered for a Unit Citation.

Respectfully submitted

*Lt. Stan Rybak*

7. RECOMMENDATION:

Deputy Chief

Division

Date