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# Radiation leak leads inspectors to test workers

DALLAS (AP) — Health inspectors tested workers in Texas and Pennsylvania who may have been exposed to harmful radiation at electronic chemicals plants where air guns used to eliminate static malfunctioned, officials said Monday.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission ordered an immediate halt Monday to distribution of the air guns until they find the cause of an apparent leak that exposed the workers of Ashland Chemical Co. to low-level radiation.

"We are taking blood and urine samples from all employees who were in the room in which the static elimination devices malfunctioned," David Lacker, director of the Texas Bureau of Radiation Control in Austin, said. "Results are expected in a day or two."

Lacker said the tests would reveal whether workers had ingested or inhaled any of the radioactive particles that leaked from the cleaning devices.

He said it appears the radiation leakage was confined to one room at the Dallas plant.

The two plants, which bottle acids used in the manufacture of semiconductors, will remain closed during testing and cleanup, Loscocco said. All 37 employees in Dallas and 90 employees in Easton, Pa., are being tested.

Meanwhile, a two-man team sought to determine how the ceramic microspheres leaked from air guns leased from 3M Corp., 3M spokesman Dennis Mick said from the 3M Static Control Systems Division in Austin.

The radiation leak was discovered Saturday night after officials checked equipment similar to that involved in radiation leaks found Thursday at Ashland's plant in Easton, 60 miles north of Philadelphia, Loscocco said.

The company notified the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Texas Bureau of Radiological Health of the contamination at the Dallas plant, Loscocco said.

The commission staff on Monday ordered 3M to suspend distribution of the models of guns used at the two plants, models in the company's 900 series, until the cause of the leaks is found and corrective action is approved by the commission.

Also, 3M was ordered to inform all users of the incident, to call for user reports of anything similar and to test other devices to come up with a "comprehensive test plan which will provide a high degree of assurance that any other leaking devices will be identified," said an announcement from the commission's staff headquarters in Bethesda, Md., near Washington.

A third Ashland plant, in Newark, Calif., showed no contamination, an NRC spokesman said Sunday.

The radioactive ceramic microspheres, smaller than a grain of sand, probably would pass through the body if they remained intact, NRC Region 1 spokesman Karl Abraham said.

The microscopic polonium spheres emit alpha particles that cannot penetrate skin, but scientists have not determined the potential hazard if the polonium 210 is ingested, Abraham said.

Ashland Chemical is a division of Ashland Oil Inc., which owned a storage tank that spilled 3.7 million gallons of fuel near Pittsburgh, with 750,000 gallons leaking into the Monongahela River.

## Weather Watch

**Key:**  
 ⚡ - Lightning    ☁ - Fog    ⚡ - Thunder  
 ● - Rain    \*\* - Snow    ☂ - Drizzle  
 ❄ - Ice Pellets    ⬇ - Rain Shower    • - Freezing

Sunset Today: 5:55 p.m.    Sunrise Wednesday: 7:18 a.m.

**Map Discussion:** An extensive ridge of high pressure, at surface and aloft, continue to dominate the local area with fair to partly cloudy skies, cool days and cold nights. The intense low pressure over New England will move offshore, snow showers will linger from the Great Lakes southeastward to the western side of the Central Appalachians. Expect a slow warming trend beginning Thursday for the local area.

**Forecast:**  
 Today through Wednesday: Fair to partly cloudy with a high today of 48 degrees. Winds light from the South. Low temperature Wednesday morning 26 degrees. High temperature Wednesday afternoon in the low 50's. No precipitation expected.

**Weather Fact:** Bubble High - A small high, complete with anticyclonic circulation of the order of 50 to 300 miles across, often induced by precipitation and wind currents associated with thunderstorms. They are relatively cold and unstable, overrunning the "Bubble High" may form squall lines on the peripheries of these systems.

Prepared by: Charles...  
Staff Meteorologist  
A&M Department of Meteorology

# Too few applicants prompt MHMR board to extend job search

AUSTIN (AP) — The search for a new state commissioner of mental health and mental retardation is taking longer than scheduled because so few people have applied for the job.

Nineteen people, including four physicians, have applied to head the largest public agency in Texas, according to a list compiled by the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation.

One of the applicants is a woman, Jan Ducker, 59, of Sunapee, N.H., executive director of Northeast Alcohol and Drug Services, a private company that operates two hospitals and three outpatient clinics in New England.

The MHMR board decided last week to extend the application period until the end of February rather than closing it on Jan. 31, as planned, said Board Chairman Roger Bateman.

The job will become available March 31, when Commissioner Garry Miller is scheduled to resign from the post he has held for six years.

Bateman said the board decided to extend the application period, "because we want to make sure there's a broad group" of applicants.

# Retarded man's sketches keep Silsbee's past alive

SILSBEE (AP) — Wade Paul knew all along there was a way he could keep folks in Silsbee from forgetting about their past, but it took a whole bunch of pencils and some encouragement from his mother before he figured it out.

The 37-year-old, mentally retarded client of the Hardin County Sheltered Workshop had, over the past two years, turned a hobby of sketching into a refined skill without really meaning to.

From there, it took only the watchful eye of the workshop's director to recognize his talent and channel it in the right direction.

This past month Paul put the finishing touches on 12 sketches of various historical landmarks in Silsbee from the early 1900s. They will appear in a 1988 calendar. Workshop officials who helped organize the calendar figured it was a great way to not only raise money for the agency, but to boost Paul's self-confidence as well.

"The people here know all the things people could forget about if someone doesn't draw them, so I asked them to help with ideas of what to draw," Paul said. "A few days to draw each one, a little longer to track down the photos."

Workshop director Wimmer who spotted Paul's abilities and up with the idea of putting the calendar, said she hunted up photographs of a young Silsbee Model A Ford and a school that housed 10 grades in one building.

And in the hands of the workshop's now-resident artists, photographs of the city's first oil plant became delicate pen and ink drawings of an age gone by.

"I drew here at the workshop at home practically non-stop," Paul said of the four months it took to complete the 12 drawings.

"At home, my mother would say, 'No TV, go do some art,'" Paul said. "She's one reason I finished the calendar."

Jones said many local people already begun to ask about the calendar, and when they can buy the calendar, which should be available before the end of the month.

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