

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-08-001

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of possible safety or public interest significance. The information is as initially received without verification or evaluation, and is basically all that is known by Region II staff (Atlanta, Georgia) on this date.

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Licensee Emergency Classification</u>
Global Nuclear Fuel - Americas L. L. C.	Notification of Unusual Event
Wilmington, NC	X Alert
Dockets/License: 70-1113/SNM-1097	Site Area Emergency
	General Emergency
	Not Applicable

Subject: ALERT DECLARED BASED ON MODERATOR ALARM IN MODERATOR-LIMITED PROCESS VESSEL

On January 30, 2008, at 6:40 p.m., Global Nuclear Fuel - Americas L. L. C. (GNF-A) declared an Alert after an instrument (an Item Relied On For Safety) alarmed based on moisture (neutron moderating material) in a cooling hopper that contained an estimated 36 kilograms of uranium dioxide enriched to 4% U-235. Based on the nuclear criticality safety analysis, the hopper is a moderator-limited vessel. GNF-A informed the NRC of the Alert at 7:00 p.m., the NRC entered Monitoring Mode at 7:22 p.m., and staffed the Region II Incident Response Center. Region II and NMSS inspectors and an Acting Branch Chief who were conducting a routine inspection at GNF-A, returned to the site's Emergency Operations Center and monitored GNF-A's actions. GNF-A determined that the quantity of material in the hopper and the amount of moderator were below the minimum critical mass, and this was confirmed by an NRC Nuclear Criticality Specialist. GNF-A developed a plan to remove the material from the hopper and place it in a favorable geometry container. GNF-A informed the NRC of these plans and then implemented them successfully. GNF-A exited from the Alert at 9:07 p.m. The NRC exited Monitoring Mode at 9:25 p.m. The NRC and GNF-A provided information to the State of North Carolina and other federal agencies during the event.

After the transfer of the material to the moderated container, GNF-A determined that there had been 28.6 kilograms of uranium in the hopper with moisture content of approximately 1000 part per million, which is within normal and acceptable range for moderator in the hopper to assure nuclear criticality safety.

GNF-A has quarantined the involved equipment and is conducting a root cause investigation of the event. Region II will initiate a Special Inspection Team to inspect the facts and circumstances surrounding the event.

Region II received initial notification of this occurrence by telephone notification from GNF-A through the NRC Operations Center. This information presented herein has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 9:00 a.m., on January 31, 2008.

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