

March 10, 2008

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

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.

Facility

Global Nuclear Fuel - Americas L. L. C.
Wilmington, NC
Dockets/License: 70-1113/SNM-1097

Licensee Emergency Classification

Notification of Unusual Event
Alert
Site Area Emergency
General Emergency
X Not Applicable

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

This preliminary notification supplements information in PNO-II-08-001 which documented the January 30, 2008, Alert declared by Global Nuclear Fuel - Americas L. L. C. (GNF-A) following the identification moisture monitoring instrumentation alarm interlock. This alarm interlock indicated the potential intrusion of moisture into Line (L) 2 of conversion process area equipment, a cooling hopper, estimated to contain uranium dioxide powder in excess of safe mass conditions. The conversion process activities include conversion of UF₆ material through vaporization, reactions within the reactor kiln and deposition of uranium dioxide within the cooling hoppers. There are three conversion process lines at GNF-A.

Following the Alert, all three conversion lines were shut-down pending completion of the licensee's root cause analysis and development of short-term and long-term corrective actions for the event. Corrective actions included increased controls for fissile material during maintenance activities; additional training of operators, engineers, and maintenance workers regarding maintenance activities; changes to conversion line startup testing to eliminate potential intrusion of moderator into the system; and enhanced communication methods among and/or between operations, maintenance, and safety staff regarding system status and associated alarms. Following completion of short-term corrective actions, all conversion process lines were operable by February 22, 2008.

On March 7, 2008, the Special Inspection Team (SIT) members completed inspection activities and debriefed Global Nuclear Fuel Americas L.L.C (GNF-A) senior management officials regarding their independent evaluation of events associated with the January 30, 2008 declared Alert. The SIT evaluation included assessment of emergency response activities, determination of contributing factors leading to the declared Alert, evaluation of criticality controls associated with conversion process line maintenance, the potential for onsite/offsite health or environmental impacts, and evaluation of proposed corrective actions. In addition, SIT staff reviewed corrective actions and directly observed conversion process line restart activities. Results of the SIT inspection are expected to be publically available in approximately 30 days.

This information presented herein has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 1:00 p.m DST., on March 10, 2008.

CONTACT: Richard Gibson
404-562-4718

George B Kuzo
404-562-5658