

July 16, 2009

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-09-002

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:

B&W Nuclear Operations Group
Lynchburg, VA
Dockets/License: 70-27/SNM-42

Licensee Emergency Classification:

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

SUBJECT: ALERT DECLARED BASED ON LOSS OF CONTROLLED PARAMETERS FOR CRITICALITY SAFETY

On July 15, 2009, at 7:45 p.m., B&W Nuclear Operations Group in Lynchburg, Virginia, activated the facility Emergency Operations Center and declared an Alert after identifying a loss of controlled parameters for criticality safety on a mechanical saw used for cutting fuel components. The licensee identified that oil which contained an unknown amount of high enriched uranium had accumulated in a receptacle of unfavorable geometry and could not immediately determine the concentration of fissile material present.

The licensee isolated the immediate area surrounding the machine and conducted external gamma radiation surveys as well as liquid sampling to determine the amount of fissile material present. External gamma surveys indicated only background levels of radiation around the machine. Four liquid samples were analyzed which indicated that suspended fissile material was present in the oil at very low concentration. Based on their measurements the licensee determined that mass control was reestablished and the licensee exited the Alert at 12:35 a.m.

The Senior Resident Inspector responded to the site and monitored licensee actions to assess conditions on site. The NRC entered the Monitoring Mode at 8:47 pm. Region II staffed the Incident Response Center in Atlanta, Georgia, and Headquarters staff manned the Headquarters Operations Center. The NRC exited the Monitoring Mode at 1:03 a.m.

The Commonwealth of Virginia was informed. The information in this preliminary notification has been reviewed with licensee management.

This information is current as of 8:00 a.m., EDT on Thursday, July 16, 2009.

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