

Notification of an Accident A Practical Approach

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Overview

- U.S. Government Emergency Response Organization
- Implementation of the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident
- Notification Challenges
- Convention on Assistance
- U.S. Experience
- Conclusion - Continued Relevance of the Conventions

U.S. Government Emergency Response Organization

- NRC is responsible for coordinating the response to incidents at commercial nuclear power plants.
- For incidents with off-site consequences, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), under the Department of Homeland Security, would coordinate the overall Federal response.
- State and local governments have primary responsibility for determining and implementing protective measures and notifying the public.

U.S. Government Emergency Response Organization

- For incidents involving another country, NRC is the National Competent Authority under the IAEA Early Notification Convention.
- Department of State would lead communications to the highest levels of the foreign government.

Practical Implications

- NRC has bilateral arrangements with its regulatory counterparts in Canada and Mexico containing provisions on prompt notification of events consistent with Article 9 of the Early Notification Convention.
- Principles and guidance for emergencies are defined in NRC's Incident Response Program (Management Directive 8.2).
- A more detailed desk procedure guides our emergency operations center international liaison desk officer.

Notification Challenges in the Age of Instantaneous Communication

Transformer Fire at Indian Point plant near New York City



Leningrad Plant Steam Leak



These photos were transmitted on social media essentially at the onset of the events.

Continued Relevance of the Early Notification Convention

- The Early Notification Convention was adopted by the General Conference in September 1986, just months after the Chernobyl accident.
- The intent was to strengthen international cooperation in providing relevant information about nuclear accidents.
- Has the ready availability of information and significant strides in technological advances made the practices under the Convention unnecessary or irrelevant?

Convention on Assistance

- The *Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency* addressed how to organize assistance as needed, and requested, by an afflicted State.
- Viewed as a vehicle to request assistance for major accidents, but might be more practically and frequently used for smaller radiological incidents.
- U.S. has not itself requested assistance through the Convention, but has offered assistance.

Conclusion

- The spirit of the Conventions is still relevant today.
- The methods by which we share information must evolve with technology.
- We must remain aware of challenges with information availability through social media and other means.
- Effective coordination nationally and internationally is key to the transmission of reliable, accurate, and timely information.