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NRC DISPATCHES AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM TO REVIEW
CHEMICAL REACTION AT URANIUM FUEL PLANT IN MISSOURI

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has dispatched an Augmented Inspection Team to the Combustion Engineering Co. uranium fuel facility in Hematite, Missouri, to review the circumstances surrounding an unexpected chemical reaction in a tank outside the plant on Thursday (August 22).

The plant processes low-enriched uranium and manufactures fuel for nuclear power plants.

The strong chemical reaction ignited materials in an adjacent tank containing flooring cleaning residue and water. The reaction was apparently caused by the improper mixing of two chemicals in the tank.

The incident occurred at 7:55 a.m., and the chemical reaction was terminated 50 minutes later. The local fire department assisted the plant fire brigade in extinguishing the burning materials.

As a precaution, non-emergency personnel were evacuated from the plant. There were no injuries associated with the chemical reaction. One person was injured when he fell during the evacuation.

Preliminary surveys by the company showed no evidence of any release of radioactive material associated with the incident.

All plant activities were resumed later in the morning, although no work is being done in the area of the tank pending further reviews by the NRC and the company.

The three-person NRC inspection team is headed by Gary Shear, a branch chief in the NRC's Region III office in Lisle, Illinois. The team members arrived at the site Thursday afternoon and evening.

When its onsite review is completed, the inspection team will meet with company representatives to present its preliminary

findings. The meeting will be open to public observation. The time and location of the meeting will be announced later.

A written report will be issued by the team several weeks after the inspection is completed.

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