

May 15, 2000

**PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE** PNO-IV-00-011

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 IV staff in Arlington, Texas on this date.

**Facility**

Pacific Gas & Electric Co.  
Diablo Canyon 1  
Avila Beach, California  
Dockets: 50-275

**Licensee Emergency Classification**

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

Subject: UNUSUAL EVENT BECAUSE OF A FIRE LASTING GREATER THAN 15 MINUTES

On May 15, 2000, at 12:25 a.m. (PDT), Diablo Canyon Unit 1 tripped from 100 percent power after a differential relay detected an electrical fault. The electrical fault caused a fire in the nonsafety-related switchgear room. The licensee declared an Unusual Event at 12:43 a.m. because the fire lasted longer than 15 minutes. The fire also caused a loss of normal and offsite electrical power to the safety-related electrical buses. All diesel generators started automatically and supplied electrical power to safety-related loads. In addition, the auxiliary feedwater pumps started, as expected, and provided cooling water to the steam generators. The loss of all offsite electrical power to the safety-related buses is also a criterion for an Unusual Event.

Following receipt of fire and smoke alarms in the electrical switchgear room, the licensee dispatched the fire brigade who extinguished the fire, using carbon dioxide, by 1 a.m. The fire brigade requested offsite assistance from the California Department of Forestry to aid in fighting the fire because of the large amount of smoke in the room. After clearing smoke from the room, the licensee declared the fire out at 1:43 a.m. The fire brigade did not use the assistance of the California Department of Forestry.

Plant conditions are stable. The diesel generators continue to provide power to safety-related buses. Because of the loss of the nonsafety-related switchgear, the licensee lost the normal method of cooling the primary system using the condenser. Consequently, operators continued to cool down the primary system using auxiliary feedwater and the atmospheric dump valves, which release steam directly to the atmosphere. The licensee is preparing to cool down the plant to Cold Shutdown. The steam released could contain minute amounts of radioactivity well below federal release limits; however, a recent steam sample showed no detectable levels of radioactivity. No impacts to public health and safety are anticipated. The licensee plans to remain in the Unusual Event until they can establish offsite electrical power to safety-related buses.

The event had no effect on Unit 2, which is stable at 100 percent power. The senior resident inspector responded to the site and Region IV initiated the monitoring phase of the normal NRC response mode at 2:05 a.m. PDT. The NRC will continue to monitor licensee actions until offsite electrical power is restored to the safety-related loads. A special inspection is being initiated to review the circumstances surrounding this event.

The state of California has been informed.

The NRC has issued a press release. Region IV received notification of this occurrence by telephone from the Headquarters Operations Officer on May 15, 2000, at 1:15 a.m. PDT.

Region IV has informed the EDO, NRR, and PA.

This information has been verified with the licensee as of 11 a.m. (CDT).

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