

June 25, 2001

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-01-024

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 the Region IV staff on this date.

Facility

San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station
Southern California Edison Company
Docket: 50-361; 50-362
License: NPF-10; NPF-15

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: SWITCHYARD FIRE CAUSED BY THE FAILURE OF THE PHASE A BUS POTENTIAL TRANSFORMER

DESCRIPTION:

On June 24, 2001, at about 11:03 a.m. PDT, the 'A' Phase Bus Potential Transformer energetically failed in the southeast 230 kV section of the San Onofre switchyard. Plant operators stated that this transformer provides no protective functions and performs a monitoring function only. Unit 3 main generator output was observed to drop from 1160 MWe to about 1130 MWe for about 2 seconds and then recover. Unit 2 generator output was unaffected. A containment chiller, and an Iso phase primary cooling fan tripped during the event. No safety-related equipment was affected and all offsite power sources remained operable. Preliminary inspection of the energized southwest 230 kV section revealed no damage.

The failure caused the southeast bus section to isolate at the intertie breaker and the remaining breakers. Additionally, the failure resulted in small debris on the road adjacent to the switchyard (Pacific Coast Highway, old Highway 101); no impediments to traffic flow resulted. Control room operators entered abnormal operating procedures, and the licensee's onsite fire department responded to the resulting fire. Halon was used to cool down smoldering pieces of the potential transformer, which was approximately one half the size of a 55 gallon drum. The fire was declared extinguished by 11:40 a.m. PDT. One individual was in the switchyard at the time of this occurrence but was not injured. No offsite personnel were injured.

As a precautionary measure, immediately following the failure, the San Onofre Security force notified the San Diego branch of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Because of the location of the San Onofre site, the FBI serves as local law enforcement. However, before they could respond, SCE determined that the event was caused by equipment failure. They informed the FBI that no response was required.

Licensee personnel stated that this portion of the switchyard belonged to San Diego Gas and Electric and that SDG&E Transmission and Distribution personnel would be out this morning to evaluate the damage.

The NRC Senior Resident Inspector responded to the site following the notification. The information assessment team was also briefed regarding the contact with the FBI. At the time of this occurrence, San Onofre Unit 1 remained permanently shutdown; San Onofre Units 2 and 3 both remained at about 100 percent power.

The state of California has been informed.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence by telephone from the Headquarters Duty Officer at 7 p.m. (CDT) on June 24, 2001. Region IV has informed the EDO, NRR, and PA.

This information has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 11:30 a.m. CDT.

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