

July 24, 2001

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-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 Region II staff (Atlanta, Georgia) on this date.

Facility

Southern Nuclear Operating Company
E. I. Hatch Nuclear Plant, Units 1 and 2
Baxley, Georgia
Dockets/License: 50-348 / NPF-2 ; 50-364 / NPF-8

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF UNUSUAL EVENT DECLARED FOR LOW COOLING WATER INTAKE
STRUCTURE LEVEL

At approximately 6:40 p.m. Monday evening, July 23, 2001, following a severe thunderstorm that washed natural debris into the Altamaha River, the Hatch Nuclear Plant received alarms for low service water intake pump well level and observed service water pump pressure oscillations. An operator dispatched to the river intake structure observed debris on the intake traveling water screens, partially clogging the screens. Per the procedure for service water problems, the operator manually started the traveling screen system which cleared the debris and restored river flow to the service water pump suction. The licensee lowered power of both Hatch Units (to 85% and 90% respectively for Units 1 and 2) per the procedure in order to minimize heat loads on the service water system.

Operators observed that the intake structure water level had briefly lowered to a level of 60.1 feet MSL (mean sea level). Consequently, at 9:36 p.m., Southern Nuclear made a formal Notification of an Unusual Event (NOUE) to the NRC as required by Hatch Emergency Plan criteria for level below 60.7 feet MSL. The NOUE was terminated immediately thereafter at 9:37 p.m. because normal intake structure water level had been restored.

Preliminary indications show that the traveling screens did not automatically start and enter a backwash cleaning cycle as designed in response to increased debris. After evaluating the condition of components cooled by service water and cleaning and flushing several cooling system strainers on individual components, the licensee increased power of both Hatch units back to 100% by 6 a.m. Tuesday morning, July 24, 2001. Southern Nuclear has assembled an Event Review Team and is continuing to investigate the automatic operation of the traveling screens. They are also closely evaluating components cooled by service water for evidence of any debris in the cooling system. The NRC resident inspectors are monitoring the licensee efforts and are independently verifying system operation.

Region II received initial notification of this occurrence by telephone from the Hatch Plant Manager. The State of Georgia was notified by the licensee. This information presented herein has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 10:00 a.m., July 24, 2001.

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