

Licensee/Facility:

EXELON GENERATION CO., LLC
 Limerick
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Dockets: 050-00352
 [1] GE-4

Notification:

MR Number: 1-2004-0003
 Date: 07/07/2004
 Call from SRI

Subject: STATUS OF DROPPED FUEL PIN RECOVERY EFFORT

Discussion:

On July 1, 2004, while Limerick was performing eddy current testing on a used fuel assembly pin (underwater in the spent fuel pool), the fuel pin fell to the bottom of the spent fuel floor. The local area radiation monitors (ARMs) and ventilation monitors did not show an increase in radiation. Later examination of the fuel pin found that both end plugs were dislodged, however the fuel pin was in a stable position and the fuel pellets remained within the pin. Limerick and their fuel inspection vendor, GE, subsequently prepared plans and assembled the necessary tools to recover this fuel pin.

The fuel bundle being tested experienced a leak during its first cycle and was removed from the core during the Spring 2004 refueling outage. Limerick was performing eddy current tests on the bundle to determine which fuel pins had cladding perforations. The pin was being held by a tool that attached to the upper end plug. However, the upper end plug weld failed during the eddy current test causing the fuel pin to drop. The lower end plug most probably became dislodged when the fuel pin hit the floor. GE's initial view is that the upper end plug weld failed due to hydriting caused by water that leaked into the pin through the fuel cladding perforations.

On the afternoon of July 7, 2004, while attempting to recover the fuel pin, six fuel pellets spilled out of the pin onto the bottom of the spent fuel pool floor; no release of radiation was detected following this event. As a precaution, a physical barrier was installed around the work area to prevent the pellets from moving. Four of the six pellets have been placed in a container; Limerick and GE are in the process of recovering the remaining two pellets today. Limerick and GE continue to work on a recovery plan for the dropped fuel pin.

This event did not reach a level requiring a 50.72 report or declaration of an emergency action level.

Regional Action: The resident inspectors continue to monitor the licensee's recovery efforts. A radiation specialist has been dispatched to the site.

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