



NRC NEWS

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NRC RELEASES EVENT REPORTS FOR NUCLEAR FUEL SERVICES AND BWXT FACILITIES FOR 2004 – 2007

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is releasing event notification reports for two nuclear fuel fabrication facilities, Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) in Erwin, Tenn., and BWX Technologies (BWXT) in Lynchburg, Va., for the period 2004 – 2007, which were previously withheld for security reasons.

Fifty-eight event reports were posted today on the NRC Web site home page at <http://www.nrc.gov>, at the Event Reports link. They are clearly marked to show that they are not new reports on recent events, and some sensitive information – primarily building identifiers – has been redacted. More event reports may be released in the future as the agency continues redacting previously withheld documents.

From 2004 until last year, nearly all documents regarding NFS and BWXT were withheld as security sensitive information under a Commission policy established in response to issues identified by the Department of Energy's Office of Naval Reactors. Last September, the Commission reversed that policy and directed the staff to release redacted documents in order to achieve an appropriate balance in ensuring its regulatory process is open to the public while maintaining the secure use and management of radioactive materials.

Although many of the reports involve events of low safety significance, they help identify performance issues that can lead to more serious problems if left uncorrected. NRC's reporting requirements protect workers and the public by allowing the NRC to evaluate whether a licensee has taken proper corrective actions. Event reports also help the NRC identify generic safety concerns so other licensees can be alerted.

Two of the event reports – EN 42393 and EN 42411 – concern the March 6, 2006, spill of high-enriched uranium at NFS and the subsequent discovery of an uncontrolled elevator pit where the uranium might have accumulated and posed a criticality risk. The spill was included in the annual report to Congress in April 2007 on abnormal occurrences at licensee facilities.

There are also two emergency notifications (EN 41841 and EN 43350), both involving BWXT. Emergencies are the most serious incidents and require immediate notification to the

NRC, which monitors the situation until the emergency is resolved. In the first emergency declaration, multiple alarms were triggered by lightning strikes. The second involved a fire in a waste compactor; the fire was extinguished within 20 minutes and no radioactive material was released. Both emergencies were resolved quickly, and neither involved a risk to public health and safety.

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