



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region II
61 Forsyth Street SW, Atlanta GA 30303
Web Site: www.nrc.gov

No. II-09-038

July 16, 2009

CONTACT: Roger Hannah (404) 562-4417
Joey Ledford (404) 562-4416

E-mail: OPA2@nrc.gov

NRC ACTIVATES INCIDENT RESPONSE CENTERS AFTER ALERT DECLARED AT B&W IN LYNCHBURG, VA.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission manned Incident Response Centers in Atlanta and Rockville, Md., Wednesday night, dispatched its resident inspector and called in criticality safety experts to monitor an alert declared at B&W Nuclear Operations Group in Lynchburg, Va. An alert is the lowest level of NRC emergency classifications for fuel facilities such as B&W.

The NRC staff continued to monitor the incident, which began at 7:45 p.m. Wednesday until its successful resolution at 12:35 a.m. Thursday.

B&W staff activated the facility's Emergency Operations Center after identifying a potential criticality issue in the Uranium Recovery area. A criticality can occur when highly enriched uranium comes together in sufficient quantity or in a container of correct shape to initiate a chain reaction resulting in either a "burst" or a sustained release of radiation.

A saw used to cut fuel components was found to have discharged oil which contained an unknown amount of highly enriched uranium into a receptacle. The facility identified that the situation represented a loss of safety controls for the uranium and declared an alert. The NRC's resident inspector for B&W responded to the site and state officials were also advised of the incident.

"Since the amount of uranium in the oil was unknown, it was important to take a conservative approach," said NRC Region II Administrator Luis Reyes.

After the facility staff analyzed the material, it was determined that only a small amount of uranium was in the oil. Based on measurements and analysis, B&W determined that control over the material was re-established and exited the alert at 12:35 a.m. Thursday.

The NRC has begun to review the incident and will soon determine what special inspections or other regulatory actions are needed.

###

News releases are available through a free *listserv* subscription at the following Web address: <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/listserver.html>. The NRC homepage at www.nrc.gov also offers a SUBSCRIBE link. E-mail notifications are sent to subscribers when news releases are posted to NRC's Web site.