March 8, 1993

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-IV-93-009

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
Idaho State University
Idaho State University
Pocatello, Idaho
Dockets: 05000284 License No: R-110

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

Subject: MANAGEMENT CONTROL CONCERNS AT RESEARCH REACTOR

On March 5, 1993, the NRC Operations Center received a telephone call from the Reactor Supervisor for the Idaho State University Research Reactor, an Aerojet General Nuclear (AGN) 201 reactor licensed to operate at 5 watts thermal. The call indicated that University security personnel were denying everyone access to the reactor facility and the Reactor Supervisor was unaware of the reason.

Subsequent discussions by NRC staff with the licensee determined that access was being controlled by the University because of verbal conflicts regarding areas of responsibility between the current Reactor Supervisor and the previous Reactor Supervisor. No one was being allowed access without the authorization of the president of the University. The licensee reported that the reactor was secure and that there were no safety concerns.

A Reactor Safety Committee meeting was held on March 6, 1993, to resolve this issue. The meeting was attended by six members of the Reactor Safety Committee including the Reactor Supervisor. The Reactor Supervisor volunteered to resign as soon as a qualified replacement could be assigned. The committee agreed and proposed to assign a Senior Licensed Operator as Acting Reactor Supervisor with the provision that the Reactor Administrator would increase his day-to-day oversight (the Acting Reactor Supervisor is currently a student scheduled to graduate in May 1993). The Reactor Safety Committee also determined that both the current and the previous Reactor Supervisors would be "decertified" from reactor operational activities and not be allowed unescorted access to the facility. The Reactor Safety Committee recommended that security personnel be removed and licensed activities resumed once the University President approved this action plan. The approved action plan will be documented in a letter to the NRC.

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There has been local press interest. NRC is responding to media inquiries.

NRC Region IV plans to dispatch an inspector to Idaho State University to confirm the licensee's actions.

The state of Idaho has been informed.
Region IV received notification of this occurrence by telephone from the Reactor Supervisor at the Idaho State University Research Reactor. Region IV has informed NRR and PA.

This information has been confirmed with a licensee representative.

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