

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF NUCLEAR REACTOR REGULATION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555-0001

December 10, 2009

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE 2009-31: NONPOWER REACTOR LICENSEE
NOTIFICATIONS TO THE NRC DURING AN
INCIDENT

ADDRESSEES

All holders of operating licenses for nonpower (research or test) reactors under the provisions of Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) Part 50, "Domestic Licensing of Production and Utilization Facilities."

PURPOSE

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is issuing this information notice (IN) to distribute lessons learned from a recent emergency declaration at a nonpower reactor regarding the appropriate NRC office to contact and the types of information that the NRC may request from licensees at that time. Recipients should review the information for applicability to their facilities and consider actions, as appropriate. The suggestions contained in this IN are not NRC requirements; therefore, no specific action or written response is required.

DESCRIPTION OF CIRCUMSTANCES

On June 11, 2008, a tornado damaged the building housing the Kansas State University research reactor, prompting the licensee to declare an Alert. The licensee appropriately notified the Operations Officer at the NRC Headquarters Operations Center by telephone. However, in subsequent conversations with other nonpower licensees, it became apparent that not all licensees knew to call the NRC Headquarters Operations Center and not the respective region or project manager during an incident.

DISCUSSION

Licensees' emergency plans describe several emergency situations covering a spectrum of emergency conditions that require the notification of the NRC. In addition, Appendix G of 10 CFR Part 73 requires licensees to contact the NRC for safeguard events. It is requested that licensees refer to Appendix D of 10 CFR Part 20, "Standards for Protection Against Radiation" for information on how to contact the NRC during an incident.

Appendix D of 10 CFR Part 20 consists of a table with the first column "Region," under which is a separate row for Region I, Region II, Region III, and Region IV, as well as a separate row for "NRC Headquarters Operations Center." The NRC staff requests that nonpower reactor licensees make notifications by telephoning the NRC Headquarters Operations Center because (1) although nonpower reactors are located throughout the country and in all four NRC Regions, all inspections, licensing, and operating licensing programs are centralized at NRC

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Headquarters and (2) the NRC Headquarters Operations Center has equivalent capabilities for contacting the Administrator any time day or night.

Table 1 lists the basic information that the NRC Headquarters Operations Officer may request from the licensee during the initial emergency notification call.

Table 1 Information Given during the Initial Emergency Notification Call

Emergency classification
Description of what occurred
Safety status of the facility and reactor
Status of security posture
Status of event, any possibility of the event degrading
Response efforts
Contact information of facility personnel who will maintain communications with the NRC

Table 2 lists some questions the NRC is likely to ask.

Table 2 Topics the NRC Is Likely To Discuss with the Licensee

What are the licensee's current top priorities for the facility?
Are there significant uncertainties about any aspect of the event (e.g., is the situation improving or degrading)?
Does the licensee need help from the NRC or other Federal agencies?
Is the licensee having any communication or staffing problems?

The licensee's primary responsibilities during an event are to mitigate the accident, secure the facility, classify the event, and make notifications. Meeting these primary responsibilities takes precedence over discussing the event with the NRC. If taking time to talk to the NRC would interfere with its primary responsibilities, the NRC expects the licensee's designated manager to direct a subordinate to take the call. If this is not feasible, the NRC will inform the licensee when the NRC Executive Team Director would like to speak with the licensee's designated representative.

CONTACT

This IN requires no specific action or written response. Please direct any questions about this matter to the technical contact listed below or the appropriate Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (NRR) project manager.

/RA/

Timothy J. McGinty, Director
Division of Policy and Rulemaking
Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation

Technical Contact: Beth Reed, NRR
(301) 415-2130
E-mail: Elizabeth.Reed@nrc.gov

Note: NRC generic communications may be found on the NRC public Web site, <http://www.nrc.gov>, under Electronic Reading Room/Document Collections.

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