

April 8, 2011

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE - PNO-IV-11-002

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, Arlington, Texas staff on this date.

Facility

Energy Northwest
Columbia Generating Station
P.O. Box 968, Mail Drop 1023
Richland, WA 99352-0968
Docket: 50-397
License No. NPF-21

Licensee Emergency Classification

Notification of Unusual Event
 Alert
 Site Area Emergency
 General Emergency
 Not Applicable

SUBJECT: COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION NOTIFICATION OF UNUSUAL EVENT

DESCRIPTION:

On April 7, 2011, at 4:07 p.m. (PDT), Columbia Generating Station declared a Notification of Unusual Event following a small release of flammable gas in the turbine building. A small amount of hydrogen gas in a pipe ignited for less than one second when workers cut into the pipe during maintenance activities. At the time of the event, the plant was in a cold shutdown condition for a planned refueling outage. There were no personnel injuries and no equipment was damaged.

Hydrogen gas is injected into the stator cooling water system during normal plant operation for corrosion control. The stator cooling water system cools the main electrical generator during plant operation. The stator cooling water system was drained prior to starting maintenance activities; however, a small pocket of hydrogen gas remained. The licensee evacuated the affected area of the plant. At 8:53 p.m. (PDT), after ensuring that the small fire was extinguished and the hydrogen gas had dissipated, the licensee terminated the Notification of Unusual Event.

An NRC inspector responded to the event to monitor and assess the licensee's actions.

The NRC received notification of this occurrence from the licensee at 4:22 p.m. (PDT) on April 7, 2011. The State of Washington has been notified.

The licensee issued a press release, and there has been media and congressional interest in this event.

The information presented herein has been discussed with the licensee and is current as of 1 p.m. CDT, on April 8, 2011.

This preliminary notification is issued for information only.

ADAMS ACCESSION NUMBER: ML110980728

CONTACTS: David Proulx
(817) 320-5686
David.Proulx@nrc.gov

Victor Dricks
(817) 917-1227
Victor.Dricks@nrc.gov