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NRC Cites Honeywell Metropolis Facility for Failure to Properly Classify Emergency Event in October 2014

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a notice of violation to the Honeywell facility in Metropolis, Ill. for the failure to declare an Alert and properly notify the NRC in response to a uranium hexafluoride leak that occurred on October 26, 2014.

The NRC staff offered Honeywell the opportunity to address the apparent violation identified by the NRC by either attending a predecisional enforcement conference or by providing a written response. In a March letter, Honeywell officials provided an explanation of the cause of the violation and described actions taken to reduce the likelihood of it happening again.

Based on an NRC inspection and the Honeywell response, the NRC has determined that there was a violation of NRC requirements. Because the company has not been subject to escalated NRC enforcement action during the past two years and has taken corrective actions, in accordance with the NRC enforcement policy, the agency will not levy a fine against Honeywell. The company's corrective actions came after a confirmatory action letter issued by the NRC in November documented Honeywell's commitment to revise procedures for classifying an emergency. Those procedure revisions were successfully demonstrated during an emergency exercise in November.

“The incident did not result in any significant actual consequences because the hazardous situation did not exist beyond the site boundary,” said NRC Region II Administrator Victor McCree. “However, this enforcement action is warranted because of the inability of the plant staff to recognize that conditions existed that required the Alert declaration. Had the leak been more severe, there could have been a hazardous environment beyond the site boundary and potential exposure to the public.”

Since Honeywell has already responded to the violation and taken appropriate corrective actions, the NRC requires no further actions from the company.