



NRC NEWS
U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION I

475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa. 19406

CONTACT: Diane Screnci (610)337-5330/ e-mail: dps@nrc.gov
Neil A. Sheehan (610)337-5331/e-mail: nas@nrc.gov

or nas@nrc.gov

I-96-73

November 5, 1996

Contact: Diane Screnci

FOR IMMEDIATE

RELEASE

Neil A. Sheehan

NRC DISPATCHES INSPECTOR TO REVIEW CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE CONTAMINATION OF TWO WORKERS AT THE HADDAM NECK
NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is reviewing an incident over the weekend at the Haddam Neck nuclear power plant, in Haddam, Connecticut, in which two workers received unplanned radiation exposures.

Northeast Utilities (NU), which operates the plant, has told the NRC that the incident occurred last Saturday morning (November 2), when two workers were performing decontamination and cleanup work in the plant's spent fuel transfer canal. In preparation for the movement of the shutdown reactor's nuclear fuel core, the workers -- one a Northeast Utilities supervisor, the other a Westinghouse refueling contractor -- spent about 15 minutes removing contamination and debris from the canal, which at the time was dry. After being flooded, the canal is used to move highly radioactive spent fuel from the reactor to the nearby circulating-water storage pool. The workers were wearing protective clothing but not respirators, breathing equipment designed to protect against airborne contamination.

Upon exiting the work area, NU determined that the workers had unknowingly conducted activities that created a significant potential for radiological exposure greater than what was originally anticipated, including handling highly radioactive debris. Further evaluation of the airborne radioactivity in the area indicated radioactive air concentrations that were significantly higher than expected, probably as a result of cleaning activities conducted by the workers. These conditions prompted NU to stop all work in the immediate area until the causes of the changes in the radiological conditions were understood and proper radiation protection measures were implemented. The employees were measured for radiation exposure, but initial recordings showed the workers did not receive a dose higher than permissible levels. For nuclear industry workers, the maximum annual exposure rate is 5 rem per year.

A senior radiation specialist from NRC Region I has been dispatched to the site to look into the incident.