

CATEGORY 1

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 CASTO, C. Region 2 (Post 820201)
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DOCKET #
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SUBJECT: PNO-II-97-026: on 970503, during cooldown, plant operators secured 3A & 3B HPI pumps, following indications of low flow & pump cavitation. Further plant cooldown put on hold, while licensee investigates cause of problem.

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PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-97-026

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 Region II staff in Atlanta, Georgia on this date.

Facility

Duke Power Co.
Oconee 3
Seneca, South Carolina
Dockets: 50-287

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

Subject: DEGRADED HIGH PRESSURE INJECTION PUMPS DURING PLANT COOLDOWN

On May 2, 1997, the Oconee Unit 3 reactor had been shutdown and a plant cooldown was begun in order to examine the condition of piping connections to the Reactor Coolant System (RCS) (see PNO-II-97-023B). At 9:20 a.m. on May 3, 1997 during the cooldown, plant operators secured the 3A and 3B High Pressure Injection (HPI) pumps following indications of low flow and pump cavitation. Further plant cooldown was put on hold while the licensee investigates the cause of the problem.

Following a briefing by the on site Resident Inspectors and the licensee management regarding plant status and the degraded HPI pumps, and with an unknown cause for pump degradation, the agency was placed in the monitoring phase of the Normal Mode of emergency response and a Region II manager was dispatched to the site. The licensee now suspects level instrumentation problems with the Letdown Storage Tank (LDST) which normally supplies water to the HPI pumps.

Subsequently, at 3:04 p.m. the licensee declared a NOUE when it was determined that repair plans would extend into the next shift. The licensee also established a Significant Event Investigation Team from the corporate office to independently assess the event.

This information is up to date as of 6:30 p.m., May 3, 1997. The reactor plant is stable at about 212F and 270 psig. The NRC Region II Incident Response Center staff and resident inspectors are closely monitoring the licensee efforts to align the remaining 3C HPI pump to the alternate suction source (Borated Water Storage Tank), and subsequent cooldown.

Region II received notification of the degraded HPI pumps from the on site NRC senior resident inspector at about 10:00 a.m. on May 3, 1997.

The State of South Carolina has been notified.

The licensee has issued a press release.

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PDR I&E
PNO-II-97-026 PDR

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