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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION I
475 ALLENDALE ROAD
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406

TECHNICAL ISSUE SUMMARY

Date: August 23, 1989

ISSUE: HIGH LEVEL RADIATION/CONTAMINATION AREA

BACKGROUND: On August 21, a local television station reported that a 4,000 square foot area of the old radwaste building at Nine Mile Point 1 has been inaccessible to personnel for the last 11 years. Radiation levels as high as 400 Rem per hour were caused by a spill in 1978. The information, obtained by the TV station from a confidential INPO report, quoted INPO that, "... a strong potential [exists] for airborne contamination from deposits built up on walls." One TV reporter complained, "And it is we, the ratepayers, who pay for the clean-up of the contaminated areas .. a situation that one company man says is a careless, sloppy accident that should never have happened."

FINDINGS/SIGNIFICANCE: In 1978, there was a recirc pump failure requiring RCS loop draindown. Due to insufficient liquid radwaste storage, the loop water was dumped to the radwaste sub-basement. The sub-basement contained 55-gallon drums of demineralizer filter sludge and resins. Some of the drums, originally supported in a carriage resting on a monorail, were floated out of the carriage. This and drum corrosion has resulted in sludge and resins spillage onto the sub-basement floor. Unplanned high water level in this space has occurred several times since 1978. The licensee has maintained a water level in the radwaste building sub-basement to prevent airborne contamination.

In 1986, an internal survey of the sub-basement was done using a robotic mechanism. It confirmed that the radioactive contents of the dumped and corroded barrels had spilled onto the floor. Licensee surveys of the sub-basement and the radwaste building perimeter drain sump indicates the contamination is contained within the radwaste building basement.

LICENSEE/NRC ACTION: The licensee has hired a contractor to clean-up the contaminated areas; and work continues. Region I dispatched an Augmented Inspection Team (AIT), commencing at the site on 8/23/89, to review Niagara Mohawk's use of a sub-basement of the old radwaste building for storage of liquid and solid radwaste. The team will also examine the on-site and off-site radiological impact of this contaminated room.

CONTACTS/REFERENCES: Rich Barkley (337-5065) Jim Wiggins (337-5224)
PNO-I-89-72, Press Release No. I-89-163, R-I Duty Log - all dated 8/22

Monte Comes
Chief, DRP Technical Support Staff

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NINE MILE POINT UNIT 1
CONTAMINATION OF SUB-BASEMENT BY LEAKING DRUMS
(AIT UPDATE)
AUGUST 21, 1989

PROBLEM

RESIN STORAGE DRUMS SPILL RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL DUE TO THEIR BEING LEFT UNCOVERED.

AIT FINDINGS

- o SUB-BASEMENT WAS USED FOR OVERFLOW FROM DRAINING OPERATIONS SINCE PLANT WAS LICENSED. (NOT UNCOMMON FOR PLANTS OF THAT VINTAGE DUE TO UNDER DESIGN OF RAD WASTE SYSTEM).
- o IN 1981 SIGNIFICANTLY MORE WATER WAS DUMPED INTO THE ROOM, FOUR FEET OF WATER INSTEAD OF ONE FOOT.
- o AT THAT TIME THE ROOM HELD DRUMS FULL OF SPENT RESIN. THE DRUMS WERE OPEN WAITING FOR THE RESINS TO DRY OUT.
- o THE WATER DISLODGED THE DRUMS SPILLING THE CONTENTS ONTO THE FLOOR.
- o AIT DETERMINED THAT THERE IS NO RELEASE PATHWAY FOR LIQUID OR SOLID RAD WASTE. AIRBORNE RELEASE IS MONITORED VIA THE PLANT STACK.
- o POSSIBLE ENFORCEMENT ACTION BECAUSE THE LICENSEE DID NOT FILE A 50.59 ANALYSIS AND FSAR UPDATE.

CONTACT: R. KARSCH
REFERENCE: 10 CFR 50.72 #16374

AIT YES
SIGEVENT NO

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Robert G. Fichenberg
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August 23, 1989

Nuclear Regulatory Commission
11555 Rockville Pike
Rockville, Md. 20852

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION
ACT REQUEST

FOIA-89-374
Res'd 8-28-89

To Whom It May Concern:

Under the Freedom of Information Act, I hereby request the following documents:

1. A report from the Institute of Nuclear Power Operations about a spill of radioactive waste at the Nine Mile Point 1 nuclear power plant in Scriba, N.Y.

2. All memos, correspondence, findings, reports, and other information concerning the spill, which occurred between 1978 and 1981.

3. Any information concerning other spills of radioactive waste at Nine Mile Point 1. This should include licensee event reports as well as other documents.

Because this information is in the public interest, please waive all copying and search fees.

Thank you for your prompt attention

Yours truly,

Jonathan D. Salant
Jonathan D. Salant

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YOUTH AND

August 23, 1989

Mr. Kenneth M. Carr, Chairman
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
1717 H Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20555

Dear Chairman Carr:

This letter will confirm the conversations between my office and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (N.R.C.) in Washington and Philadelphia today. The discussions related to the 1978 spill of radioactive material at the Nine Mile Point I nuclear plant in the town of Scriba, New York.

From press accounts, a team from the Philadelphia regional office is already at the site, operating as an augmented inspection team under the direct orders of N.R.C. Region I Administrator William T. Russell.

Several citizens from my district have voiced concern over this "accident" and the condition of both Nine Mile Point plants I & II. I have assured them that the N.R.C. would conduct a thorough investigation of the problem, including a test of the waters in the affected area, and that a public report would be made available as quickly as possible.

I'm sure we would agree that facts, not rumors, are necessary at this time. Mr. Russell indicated to my staff that several problems needed to be evaluated involving Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation and N.R.C. regulations. I would, therefore, respectfully request the opportunity to review the findings of your staff after they have returned from their inspection. The public's right to know is of paramount importance in this matter.

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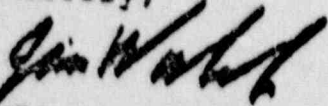
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Should you or your staff need to contact me, please call my administrative assistant, Art Jutton, in Washington. I look forward to meeting directly with the N.R.C. upon the completion of your report.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,



JAMES T. WALSH
Member of Congress

JTW:map

cc: Mr. William T. Russell
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
475 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406