

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION

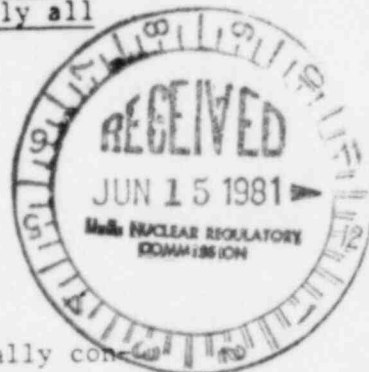
Date: June 2, 1981

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-III-81-53

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information presented is as initially received without verification or evaluation and is basically all that is known by IE staff as of this date.

FACILITY: General Electric - Morris Operation  
Morris, Illinois  
Docket No. 70-1308

SUBJECT: CONTAMINATED SPENT FUEL CASK



The outer surface of a NAC-1D spent fuel cask was found to be generally contaminated above the DOT limit of 22,000 dpm/100 cm<sup>2</sup> (to levels as high as 500,000 dpm/100 cm<sup>2</sup>) when the cask arrived at the LaCrosse Reactor Facility on May 29 with two spent fuel assemblies which were shipped from General Electric - Morris Operation. Surveys conducted at Morris before the shipment indicated no contamination above 2200 dpm/100 cm<sup>2</sup>. The empty cask was decontaminated to levels averaging less than 2000 dpm/100 cm<sup>2</sup> before return to Morris, but the surface was again found at Morris to be generally contaminated to levels as high as 300,000 dpm/100 cm<sup>2</sup>. The reasons for the increases in contamination levels are uncertain. The conversion of fixed contamination to removable contamination by effects of time, moisture, and transport conditions is considered possible.

The cask passed through a rainstorm during the transit from Morris to the LaCrosse Reactor Facility, but not on the return trip. Based on cask and trailer contamination levels, and the absence of contamination on an automobile which followed the trailer, there was no hazard to the public health and safety.

A small group of demonstrators attempted to block the entrance to the Morris site on return of the empty cask on May 31. Local law enforcement officers dispersed the group. The demonstrators remained in the vicinity of the plant over the weekend, apparently awaiting departure of the next fuel shipment, and contacted the news media to express their concerns about the spent fuel shipments.

After extensive decontamination efforts and testing in an attempt to assure that contamination limits will not again be exceeded, the loaded cask departed Morris for LaCrosse on June 2. The cask is due to arrive at LaCrosse mid-afternoon on June 2.

The States of Illinois and Wisconsin and USDOT are being informed. Neither the licensees nor Region III (Chicago) plan to issue a press release at this time. Region III has responded to news media inquiries about the shipments. This PN is being issued for information at this time because of the potential for public awareness of the incident.

Region III learned of the situation by telephone contacts with the licensees involved and onsite review by Region III inspectors at Morris and LaCrosse. RIII will continue to monitor the situation. This information is current as of 11:00 a.m., June 2, 1981.

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