

July 2, 1981

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-TMI-81-14

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 NRC staff on this date.

Facility: Metropolitan Edison Company
Three Mile Island, Unit 2
Middletown, Pennsylvania
Docket Number 50-320



Subject: CONTAMINATION INCIDENT DURING REACTOR BUILDING ENTRY ON JULY 1, 1981
(ENTRY #13)

During the Unit 2 Reactor Building entry on July 1, 1981, four technicians inspected and surveyed the polar crane. The results of the two hour inspection indicated that all six of the crane motors which were meggered had faulty wiring. There are a total of 14 motors on the Unit 2 polar crane. Insulation on power cables was damaged to the extent that bare conducting wires were visible. On previous entries, damage to electrical components was observed only on small gage electrical wires. The wooden operator's cab on top of the crane was charred and there were indications that flames had existed in the cab. Crane mechanical components appeared undamaged although there were patches of rust. The licensee is evaluating the information to determine what repairs will be necessary to refurbish the polar crane. The polar crane will be needed to remove the reactor vessel head and internals prior to fuel removal.

Upon exiting the Reactor Building, the team underwent routine "frisking" for radioactive contamination. This frisking revealed that portions of the skin on each of the four team members were contaminated. Standard decontamination procedures were initiated. Frisking after the completion of the decontamination revealed persistent contamination levels of approximately 2,500 dpm on two individuals (arms), and 5,000 dpm on another (left buttock). The fourth individual was successfully decontaminated.

Licensee representatives decided at 4:30 p.m., July 1, 1981, that outside consultant medical assistance and advice would be requested. A 10 CFR 50.72 report to the NRC Operation Center was made concurrently with the request for assistance. A whole body count (gamma scan) on each individual has been scheduled, and is a requirement after each Reactor Building entry.

As of 9:00 a.m., July 2, 1981, the licensee reported that the contamination levels had been reduced to less than 500 dpm on two of the individuals. The remaining individual was decontaminated to less than 1100 dpm. The contamination is localized to a small portion of the skin on the left buttock. The dose incurred by any of the individuals due to the contamination is less than one millirem to the skin.

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This preliminary notification is issued for information only. The onsite NRC staff will continue to review this occurrence and its possible causes.

The licensee plans to issue a press release today. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been informed. The NRC does not plan to issue a press release.

The NRC TMI Program Office received notification of this event from Unit 2 Operations at 4:30 p.m., July 1, 1981.

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