



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

REGION IV
611 RYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 1000
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011

November 16, 1981

Gentlemen:

The enclosed NRC Information Notice provides early notification of an event that may have significance. Accordingly, you should review the information notice for possible applicability to your facility.

No specific action or response is requested at this time; however, contingent upon the results of further staff evaluation, a bulletin or circular recommending or requesting specific licensee actions may be issued. If you have questions regarding this matter, please contact this office.

Sincerely,

John T. Collins
Regional Administrator

Enclosures:

1. NRC Information Notice No. 81-34
2. List of Recently Issued
NRC Information Notices

NRC Information Notice No. 81-34: ACCIDENTAL ACTUATION OF PROMPT PUBLIC
NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

Licensee

Facility/Docket Number

Arkansas Power and Light Company
Little Rock, Arkansas

Arkansas Nuclear One, Unit 1 & 2
50-313; 50-368

Nebraska Public Power District
Columbus, Nebraska

Cooper Nuclear Station
50-298

Omaha Public Power District
Omaha, Nebraska

Fort Calhoun Station
50-285

Public Service Company of Colorado
Denver, Colorado

Fort St. Vrain Generating Station
50-267

Gulf States Utilities
Beaumont, Texas

River Bend
50-458; 50-459

Houston Lighting & Power Company
Houston, Texas

South Texas Project
50-498; 50-499

Kansas Gas & Electric Company
Wichita, Kansas

Wolf Creek
STN 50-482

Louisiana Power & Light Company
New Orleans, Louisiana

Waterford-3
50-382

Texas Utilities Generating Company
Dallas, Texas

Comanche Peak Steam Electric Station
50-445; 50-446



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Accession No.:
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IN 81-34

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555

November 16, 1981

NRC INFORMATION NOTICE NO. 81-34: ACCIDENTAL ACTUATION OF PROMPT PUBLIC
NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

Description of Circumstances:

Recently the Maine Yankee prompt notification system was inadvertently activated. The Maine Yankee system consists of three subsystems, one of which uses radio controlled fixed sirens to alert the public to the existence of a regional emergency. The regional emergency signal, which would be used in the event of an emergency at Maine Yankee or any other type of regional emergency requiring public notification, can be activated by Maine Yankee plant personnel, by the county Sheriff, and by the State Police. In a regional emergency, all fixed sirens are activated simultaneously by a single radio signal carrying a two-tone sequential command encoded at the transmitter and decoded at each siren's radio receiver. The public has been instructed that when they hear the regional emergency alert signal, they should tune in the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) and/or the local National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) station to get information about the nature of the emergency and what they are to do.

The fixed sirens can develop more than one sound. In addition to a common regional emergency sound, each siren can also produce a different, distinctive sound which is used by local fire companies to signal a fire. The controls for fire calls are independent of the regional alert control.

Recently the fixed sirens were activated three times in rapid succession by radio signals generated by the State Police in the course of routine police radio pager operations not connected with a regional emergency.

For a time neither Maine Yankee personnel, the county Sheriff, nor the State Police realized that the regional emergency signal had been triggered. No emergency instructions or announcements were broadcast to the public via EBS or NOAA, so some concerned citizens telephoned the plant and the State Police for further information. In all, about one hour elapsed between the first siren system activation and the first media announcement indicating no emergency existed.

Since this event, the State Police, who have the authority to activate EBS and NOAA, have developed "no emergency" messages and procedures which can be quickly aired should another emergency signal be produced in the absence of an emergency. They have also altered their radio operations plan to assure an offending signal will not be generated. Maine Yankee has altered the tone sequencing scheme to render it unlike tone sequences typical of commercially

available paging systems. These steps will reduce the likelihood of a recurrence and provide for rapid announcements to the public over EBS stations and NOAA weather radio in the event a "no emergency" message is needed. Thus, the "no emergency" message will reach the public in the same way emergency instructions would, and just as rapidly. These are interim steps.

In the longer term, an encoded digital message will be used to activate the sirens. This offers far more security than the sequenced tone system it will replace. The "no emergency" announcement capability will be retained.

This information notice is provided to make licensees and applicants aware of this event and its associated problems. We expect that licensees will review this information for applicability at their facilities.

No written response to this information notice is required. If additional information is desired regarding this matter, please contact the Regional Administrator of the appropriate NRC Regional Office.

LISTING OF RECENTLY ISSUED
NRC INFORMATION NOTICES

Information Notice No.	Subject	Date Issued	Issued To
81-26	Compilation of Health Physics Related Information Items	8/28/81	All power reactor facilities with an Operating License (OL) or Construction Permit (CP)
81-27	Flammable Gas Mixtures in the Waste Gas Decay Tanks in PWR Plants	9/3/81	All power reactor facilities with an Operating License (OL) or Construction Permit (CP)
81-28	Failure of Rockwell-Edward Main Steam Isolation Valves	9/3/81	All power reactor facilities with an Operating License (OL) or Construction Permit (CP)
81-29	Equipment Qualification	9/24/81	All power reactor facilities with an Operating License (OL) or Construction Permit (CP)
81-30	Velan Swing Check Valves	9/28/81	All power reactor facilities with an Operating License (OL) or Construction Permit (CP)
81-31	Failure of Safety Injection Valves to Operate Against Differential Pressure	10/8/81	All power reactor facilities with an Operating License (OL) or Construction Permit (CP)
81-32	Transfer and/or Disposal of Spent Generators	10/23/81	All medical licensees
81-33	Locking Devices Inadequately Installed on Main Steam Isolation Valves	11/9/81	All power reactor facilities with an Operating License (OL) or Construction Permit (CP)

Enclosure