

Date: October 29, 1993

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PN19359

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 the Region I staff on this date.

Facility:

Pennsylvania Power & Light Co.
Susquehanna Unit 1
Berwick, Pennsylvania

Licensee Emergency Classification:

☐ Notification of Unusual Event
☐ Alert
☐ Site Area Emergency
☐ General Emergency
☒ Not Applicable

Docket No.: 50-387

License No.: NPF-14

Event No.: N/A

Event Location Code: POW

Subject: FUEL HANDLING PROBLEMS DURING REFUELING

On October 26, 1993, at approximately 10:08 a.m., during refueling activities, an unexpected drop of a section of the refueling mast occurred while lowering a bundle into the core. Prior to the event, the operators experienced two Fault Lockout alarms on the bridge. The fuel bundle was above the core (Position 375") at the time. The fuel bundle and top guide were checked for interference and none was found. After bundle insertion, the mast was fully raised and lowered three times. A loud noise and jerk were experienced one time. Maintenance investigated and discovered a bend in the mast. The licensee determined that the fuel bundle did not drop during the event. The Unit 2 refueling bridge was transferred to Unit 1 and the required surveillance test performed and core reload resumed.

On October 27, at 3:38 p.m., while transferring a double blade guide (temporarily inserted in the reactor core for control blade support while the fuel is removed) from the reactor vessel to the spent fuel pool, the blade guide contacted the vessel wall. The senior reactor operator noticed the blade guide was not lifted high enough to have sufficient clearance and alerted the reactor operator to stop. The bridge was stopped, however, momentum of the blade guide caused it to swing on the mast grapple and contact the vessel wall. The guide was raised to proper height and the blade guide placed in the proper location in the spent fuel pool. The mast was exercised and found to be vibrating more than previously noted. The licensee halted refueling operations. Procedure changes were made to ensure consistent fuel handling practices. The refueling mast was inspected and surveillances performed satisfactorily. The licensee resumed core reload.

On October 28, at 7:10 a.m., while attempting to grapple a new fuel bundle in the fuel pool, for reload into the core, operators heard a loud noise on the refueling bridge. The refueling bridge was aligned above the bundle and the mast lowered to grapple the bundle. Between 193" and 201.6" (just above the full down position for the spent fuel pool) two loud bangs were heard and a large amount of air bubbles were observed on the pool. The bubbles were observed for 5-10 seconds then stopped. No radiation alarms were received during the event. The licensee suspended all refueling activities.

Based on the multiple continuing problems encountered during refueling operations, an Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) is being dispatched to the site. The team will consist of five members, including an NRR Human Factors Specialist and a Regional Operator Licensing Examiner. The licensee has suspended refueling activities pending AIT review and evaluation.

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The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has been notified. The licensee is considering a press release and the Region I Public Affairs Office is prepared to respond to media inquiries. This notification is current as of 11:00 p.m. on October 29.

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