

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PN1-9425A

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:
Salem Generating Station, Unit 1
Public Service Electric and Gas Co.
Hancocks Bridge, New Jersey 08038

Licensee Emergency Classification:
 Notification of Unusual Event
 Alert
 Site Area Emergency
 General Emergency
 Not Applicable

Docket No.: 50-272
License No.: DPR-70
Event No.: NONE
Event Location Code: POW

SUBJECT: STATUS REPORT UPDATE FROM NRC AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM

The Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) remains onsite gathering data, conducting interviews, inspecting equipment, meeting with the licensee, concurring in licensee action plans and analyzing facts.

On April 12, 1994, at 6:45 a.m., the Senior Resident Inspector noted that RVLIS channel A indicated 93% reactor vessel level. Salem Unit 1 was in cold shutdown, RCS temperature 173°F, RCS pressure 22 psig with all reactor coolant pumps (RCPs) off and one train of RHR operating at 3000 gpm flow. Control room operators found that full range and upper range on both channels indicated 93% level (four indications total). Although operators initially suspected instrument calibration problems, they subsequently concluded that the indication was accurate, that non-condensable gases had accumulated in the vessel head, and that the space occupied by the gases extended approximately 18 inches from the top of the reactor vessel head. They also found that reactor vessel level had trended downward very slowly since Saturday, when the RCPs were secured.

As a result of identification of the gas volume, operators began hourly logging of RVLIS indication, in addition to the normal logging of core exit thermocouple readings, RHR flow and pump amps, RCS temperature and pressure, charging flow and letdown flow. In addition, they opened the PORVs to vent the pressurizer, and reduced Volume Control Tank nitrogen cover gas pressure from about 40 psig to 15 psig. Water level (RVLIS) has been constant at about 90% since reducing VCT pressure, and the licensee does not perceive any immediate threat to safety.

The licensee sampled the gas on April 13, and found it to be 96% Nitrogen and 3% Hydrogen. The AIT will continue to follow the licensee's activities to determine the cause of the gas build-up in the head, and plans to vent the gas to support plant start-up.

The licensee issued a press release on April 13, updating their internal investigation results. Region I, Public Affairs is responding to media inquiries.

The State of New Jersey has been notified.

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