

(UPDATE)

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-I-91-90A

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information has been confirmed by the licensee, and is basically all that is known by the Region I staff on this date.

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power
Governor Hunt Road
Vernon, Vermont
Docket No. 50-271

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

Subject: FIRE INVOLVING TRUCK TRANSPORTING NEW FUEL TO A POWER REACTOR

At approximately 4:00 a.m. on December 16, 1991, a truck, traveling north on Interstate 91 in Springfield, Massachusetts carrying 12 shipping containers (24 fuel bundles) of unirradiated low enriched fuel, was struck by an automobile traveling south in the wrong lane. The truck was carrying the fuel from a General Electric facility in Wilmington, North Carolina to Vermont Yankee. Three of the shipping containers were observed to be deformed in the ensuing fire, one significantly. Openings in the containers resulted, exposing the fuel assemblies in some instances. However, none of the fuel rods appeared to be ruptured. This was verified through the analysis of smears, taken immediately around the accident scene and on the container which revealed no contamination or elevated radiation levels. The type of container involved in the accident had previously been tested to assure that the conditions observed in this accident could be met without breaching the fuel. An NRC resident inspector and an NRC transportation specialist/health physicist responded to the accident scene.

The fuel was transported to a nearby Air Force base at about 4:00 p.m. on December 16, 1991 where the containers were inspected. Once replacement outer containers are received at the inspection site, the metal inner containers will be banded as needed to secure the lids in place, inserted into the replacement outer containers, and transported back to the General Electric Wilmington facility. The replacement containers are expected to arrive at the inspection site by noon on December 17, 1991. Transportation will be either by air or closed van and is expected to occur within the next few days.

A Region I inspector is monitoring the inspection and preparation for further transport of the shipping containers.

NRC Headquarters, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, DOT, and NRC Region I will continue to monitor the status of this incident. There was significant media coverage of the accident, including some incorrect references to the involvement of "spent fuel." Region I will continue to respond to media inquires. This information is current as of 9:30 a.m. on December 17, 1991.

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INPO-1:45 p.m.
NSAC-1:40 p.m.

RI Resident Office 1:50 p.m.

Licensee: 1:52 p.m.
(Reactor Licensees)

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