

January 31, 1997

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-II-97-007

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 Region II staff in Atlanta, Georgia on this date.

Facility

Florida Power Corporation  
Crystal River 3  
Crystal River, Florida  
Dockets: 50-302

Licensee Emergency Classification

X Notification of Unusual Event  
Alert  
Site Area Emergency  
General Emergency  
Not Applicable

Subject: NEWS MEDIA INTEREST IN FOSSIL PLANT TRANSFORMER EXPLOSION NEAR  
CRYSTAL RIVER 3

At approximately 1:20 a.m. Thursday morning January 30, 1997, a main 230 kV step-up transformer caught fire and exploded at Crystal River Unit 4 (coal plant north of nuclear Unit 3). The explosion lifted the transformer off of its base and toppled it on its side. There were no personnel injuries. The fire lasted approximately 30 minutes and was extinguished by foam application. Crystal River Unit 3 (CR3) supplemented the response by dispatching four extra fire brigade qualified individuals to Unit 4 and supplying four pallets of foam from their warehouse. The dispatched individuals were not filling roles on the required CR3 fire brigade. Offsite help was requested and received by the DeRosa Volunteer Fire Department. The transformer shell split but remained largely intact so there was minimal oil loss to the environment. The transformer oil did not contain PCBs.

The impact on CR3 was limited to a minor 230 kV switchgear perturbation due to CR4 separating from the grid with no loss of offsite power to CR3. This caused reactor building purge to be secured which the operators restored after approximately five minutes. As a precautionary measure, the operators manually aligned the control room habitability complex ventilation to recirculation mode for approximately 4.5 hours due to the smoke plume from the fire extending over CR3. After receiving further information on the nature of the transformer failure, the Operations Shift Supervisor determined the explosion warranted a declaration of a NOUE and notified the State of Florida and the NRC Operations Center at approximately 1:45 p.m. The CR3 NOUE emergency action level criteria is a "severe explosion near or within the 0.83 Site Boundary but not affecting plant operations." CR4 is approximately 0.7 miles away from CR3. The operators originally believed the event was a fire that did not involve a severe explosion. Florida Power Corporation has not issued a press release at this time.

The Senior Resident Inspector has been reviewing the licensee's actions.

The State of Florida has been informed.

This information is current as of 2:15 p.m. January 30, 1997.

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