

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PN1-99-003

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:  
New York Power Authority  
FitzPatrick  
Lycoming, New York

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

Docket No.: 50-333  
License No.: DPR-29  
Event No.: 35262  
Event Location Code: POW

**SUBJECT: NOTIFICATION OF AN UNUSUAL EVENT DUE TO A FIRE AT AN ONSITE HYDROGEN STORAGE FACILITY**

At 1:13 p.m. on Thursday, January 14, 1999, the New York Power Authority (NYPA) declared an unusual event at the FitzPatrick Nuclear Plant due to a fire at an onsite hydrogen storage facility. At the time of the event, the plant was at 100 percent power and remained at full power for the duration of the event. The hydrogen storage facility contained 30 large cylinders storing compressed hydrogen gas as well as a bank of cylinders installed on a truck trailer parked adjacent to, and disconnected from, the facility. This hydrogen facility supplies hydrogen for addition to the reactor coolant system to control water chemistry as well as to cool the main turbine generator. The facility is located inside the protected area approximately 150 feet north of the 115 kV switchyard and 250 feet west of the emergency diesel generator building.

In response to the fire, NYPA's fire brigade, two local fire departments and a fire brigade from the nearby Alcan Aluminum Production Facility responded to the site. As a precaution, the FitzPatrick Administration Building Annex, located approximately 500 feet from the hydrogen storage facility, was evacuated. To ensure the safety of the fire fighters, who sprayed water on the fire from a location in close proximity to the 115 kV switchyard, NYPA deenergized these two offsite power lines and entered the Technical Specification LCO on this equipment. FitzPatrick subsequently started the four emergency diesel generators and ran them unloaded as required by the TSs. At 2:05 p.m., fire officials declared the fire under control; however, water continued to be sprayed on the storage facility until the entire contents of the hydrogen cylinders were depleted. No attempt was made to isolate the hydrogen supply to the fire for personnel safety reasons.

FitzPatrick exited the NOUE at 9:05 p.m. after declaring that the fire was out and there was no possibility of a reflash. At that time, the hydrogen cylinders were determined to be empty and were isolated. FitzPatrick then restored its normal offsite electrical lineup.

Niagara Mohawk, owner and operator of the adjacent Nine Mile Point Station, also declared an unusual event at 1:47 p.m. due to its proximity to the FitzPatrick facility. Niagara Mohawk secured from its NOUE at 9:25 p.m..

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NRC Region I responded to this event by staffing its incident response center, entering a monitoring mode, and establishing communications with the facility and the HQ Operations Center. NYPA has begun a root cause evaluation of this event with the assistance of outside consultants. The NRC will review NYPA's findings and corrective actions regarding this event as well as the plant equipment lineup changes made during this event.

The State of New York was notified of the event. NYPA, Niagara Mohawk and the NRC issued press releases regarding this event; substantial public and media interest in this event have occurred.

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