

August 18, 1989

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE -- PNO-IV-89-51A

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 IV staff on this date.

FACILITY: Houston Lighting & Power Company
South Texas Project, Unit 1
DN: 50-498

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

SUBJECT: RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION OUTSIDE RADIATION CONTROLLED AREA

This update provides additional information to PNO-IV-89-51 dated August 15, 1989.

During a routine radiological survey on August 14, 1989, of radiation controlled area (RCA), within the mechanical auxiliary building (MAB), Houston Lighting & Power Company (HL&P) found contamination in a stairwell. The stairwell was near normally noncontaminated auxiliary steam condensate piping associated with the radwaste evaporator. Further survey found the auxiliary steam condensate piping and the inorganic basin contaminated.

A special inspection team held its exit on August 15, 1989. The cause of the event appeared to be operator error during shutdown of the radwaste evaporator on August 10, 1989, leaving two valves open which contaminated the auxiliary steam condensate piping and the inorganic basin. The valves were left open from August 10 to August 14, 1989, during which time liquid waste was processed through that path at least twice. HL&P has identified the limits of the contamination and has stated that the liquid waste system and auxiliary boiler will not be operated until the root cause is fully understood and corrective action is implemented.

Additional contamination was found at South Texas Project, Unit 1 (STP-1). At approximately 1 p.m. (CDT) on August 17, 1989, operators of STP-1 noted an increase in the readings of the turbine building sump radiation monitor. HL&P took liquid samples at 1:45 p.m. of the turbine building sump and found low levels of Co-58 (on the order of 10^{-7} micro curies/ml). HL&P traced contamination through additional samples to the 11A MAB chiller open cooling system discharge drain to the turbine building sump. The contamination source appears to be from normal discharge from the liquid waste and discharge system into common headers. A leaky isolation valve on the 11A MAB chiller allowed back flow from the common discharge header through the open cooling water system to the turbine building floor drains. The turbine building sump discharges to an oily waste tank, where activity was found to be on the order of 10^{-8} micro curies/ml Co-58. Radioactivity in the oily waste tank has not been released.

HL&P has determined that these two contamination events were unrelated. No personnel were contaminated. HL&P is studying how to perform cleanup of both contamination events, including the potentially contaminated oil from the oily waste tank.

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Neither the licensee nor the NRC plans to issue a press release.

The state of Texas will be informed.

Region IV received notification of this occurrence from the resident inspector at 10:30 a.m., August 18, 1989. Region IV has informed NRR and Public Affairs.

This information has been confirmed with a licensee representative.

CONTACT: M. Skow, FTS 728-8287

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