



**FEMA**

November 15, 2022

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** David Gudinas, Deputy Director  
Technological Hazards Division  
National Preparedness Directorate  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security-FEMA

**THROUGH:** Thomas Warnock, Chief  
Radiological Emergency Preparedness Branch  
Technological Hazards Division  
National Preparedness Directorate  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security-FEMA

**FROM:** Kevin B. Wells, Chief/RAC Chairperson,  
Technological Hazards Branch  
National Preparedness Division  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security-FEMA, R4

**SUBJECT:** Preliminary Capability Assessment Following Hurricane Nicole –  
St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant

**Background:**

On Thursday, November 10, 2022, Hurricane Nicole made landfall at the northernmost point of Hutchinson Island, just south of Vero Beach and near the border of St. Lucie County and Indian River County, approximately ten miles north of the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant. A category one hurricane with maximum sustained winds estimated to be 75 miles per hour, Hurricane Nicole brought up to five feet of storm surge, rain, and strong winds that caused power outages, localized flooding, and required protective actions and response efforts by federal, state, and local authorities. The risk counties of Martin and St. Lucie, as well as the host counties of Brevard, Indian River, and Palm Beach implemented various protective actions that included: activation of emergency operation centers; voluntary or mandatory evacuation for coastal zones; sheltering and mass care activities; and emergency public information and warnings. During the storm, Florida Power & Light maintained 100% power generation.

FEMA Region 4, in coordination with NRC Region II, communicated with representatives from the Florida Division of Emergency Management; risk counties Martin and St. Lucie; host counties Brevard, Indian River, and Palm Beach; and the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant. These communications began on November 5, 2022, prior to the storm making landfall and continued through Friday, November 11, 2022, to assess the offsite capabilities potentially affected by Hurricane Nicole.

On Friday, November 11, 2022, based on the Preliminary Capabilities Assessment performed and our review of available information gathered in discussions with state and local government agencies, FEMA Region 4 concluded that offsite radiological emergency preparedness remained adequate to provide a reasonable assurance determination. Appropriate measures could be taken to protect the health and safety of the public in the event of a radiological emergency at the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant. At this time, FEMA Region 4 is not recommending actions to conduct a Disaster Initiated Review of offsite emergency preparedness within the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant 10-mile emergency planning zone. The Regional Administrator and the Federal Preparedness Coordinator are aware of this decision.

FEMA Region 4 assessed the offsite capabilities of the response organizations as it relates to the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant. The assessment is as follows:

**Assessment:**

**Operational Coordination**

The state emergency operations center in Tallahassee, as well as the counties of Brevard, Martin, Indian River, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie, were activated to level 1 (full activation) for the storm. At the time of the preliminary capabilities' assessment, all the previously mentioned county emergency operations centers had reduced or were planning to reduce activation levels within the next 24 hours to Level 2 (partial activation) or Level 3 (monitoring). The state of Florida emergency operations center deactivated for Hurricane Nicole on November 13 but remained active activated for a previous disaster. The county and state emergency operation centers were not compromised and were capable of coordinating emergency response operations in support of the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant.

**Operational Communications**

Primary and secondary communication systems were operable. No irregularities or failures were noted in the communication networks among the utility, state, or counties.

**Public Information and Warning**

The prompt alert and notification system for the 10-mile emergency planning zone was operable, with no reported issues. The risk counties had the resources to conduct backup route alerting if needed. Additionally, the joint information system had the capability to make emergency public information and instructions relative to the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant in a timely manner.

### **Critical Transportation**

The state and risk counties maintained enough transportation assets to fulfill requirements. Movement of transportation dependent populations to include disabled, access/functional needs, and schools were unencumbered. Schools in the impacted area were closed on the day of the storm.

### **Situational Assessment**

The Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Radiation Control maintained resources to provide independent radiological dose assessment and recommendations to decision makers on protective actions for the health and safety of the public.

### **Environmental Response, Health, and Safety**

The Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Radiation Control could have deployed the state's radiological field monitoring teams to monitor and assess a radiological plume if needed. Additionally, the risk counties had the ability to monitor and decontaminate the public and emergency workers.

### **Mass Care Services**

The risk counties had the resources to operate reception and congregate care centers in accordance with their plans and procedures. Several shelters were activated during Hurricane Nicole with limited occupancy, but all reception centers and shelters remained available.

### **Public Health, Healthcare and Emergency Medical Services**

The supporting county emergency medical services were not degraded and were capable of responding, treating, and transporting a radiologically contaminated injured individual.

### **On-Scene Security, Protection and Law Enforcement**

The counties maintained satisfactory law enforcement assets to perform the duties required of them. A portion of a roadway along a designated evacuation route in St. Lucie County was washed-out by the storm; however, a detour was identified. No other primary evacuation routes inside of the 10-mile emergency planning zone were impacted.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the information collected for this assessment, the state of Florida and affected counties surrounding the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant are capable of implementing their radiological emergency plans and procedures as written. There is not sufficient damage to the 10-mile EPZ infrastructure to raise doubts on the adequacy of their emergency preparedness. Therefore, the FEMA Region 4 RAC Chairperson concludes that offsite radiological emergency preparedness remains adequate to provide a reasonable assurance determination relative to the St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant and a Disaster Initiated Review is not required.