

March 30, 1979

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE--PNO-79-67C

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of event of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information presented is as initially received without verification or evaluation and is basically all that is known by IE staff on this date.

Facility: Three Mile Island Unit 2
Middletown, Pennsylvania (DN 50-520)

Subject: NUCLEAR INCIDENT AT THREE MILE ISLAND

Plant Status

There have been intermittent uncontrolled releases of radioactivity into the atmosphere from the primary coolant system of Unit 2 of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Power Plant near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The licensee is attempting to stop the intermittent gaseous releases by transferring the radioactive coolant water into the primary containment building. The levels of radioactivity being measured have been as high as 20 to 25 millirem per hour in the immediate vicinity of the site at ground level. Off-site levels were a few milliroentgen.

At about 11:30 a.m. EST, the Chairman of the NRC has suggested to Governor Thornburg of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that pregnant women and pre-school children in an area within five miles of the plant site be evacuated. Members of the NRC technical staff are at the site and efforts to reduce the temperatures of the reactor fuel are continuing. These temperatures have been coming down slowly and the final depressurization of the reactor vessel has been delayed. There is evidence of severe damage to the nuclear fuel. Samples of primary coolant containing high-levels of radioiodine and instruments in the core indicate high fuel temperatures in some of the fuel bundles, and the presence of a large bubble of non-condensable gases in the top of the reactor vessel.

Because of these non-condensable gases, the possibility exists of interrupting coolant flow within the reactor when its pressure is further decreased and the contained gases expand. Several options to reach a final safe state for the fuel are under consideration. In the meantime, the reactor is being maintained in a stable condition.

Contact: SEBryan, IE x28188 ELJordan, IE x28188

Distribution: Transmitted H St 4.15
Chairman Hendrie
Commissioner Kennedy
Commissioner Gilinsky

Commissioner Bradford
Commissioner Ahearne

S. J. Chilk, SECY
C. C. Kammerer, CA
(For Distribution)

Transmitted: MNBB 4.33
L. V. Gossick, EDO
H. L. Ornstein, EDO
J. J. Fouchard, PA
N. M. Haller, MPA
R. G. Ryan, OSP
H. K. Shapar, ELD

P. Bldg 4.17
H. R. Denton, NRR
R. C. DeYoung, NRR
R. J. Mattson, NRR
V. Stello, NRR
R. S. Boyd, NRR
SS Bldg 4.35
W. J. Dircks, NMSS

J. G. Davis, IE
Region I 4.30
II 4.33
III 4.43
(MAIL) 4.40
J. J. Cummings, OIA
R. Minogue, SD