



# NRC NEWS

## U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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### NRC ISSUES ANNUAL REPORT ON ABNORMAL OCCURRENCES FOR FY2011

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has released its annual report on abnormal occurrences for fiscal year 2011, citing 23 events involving radioactive materials and one event at a commercial nuclear power plant.

An accident or event is considered an abnormal occurrence if it involves a major reduction in the degree of protection of public health and safety. Abnormal occurrences can include, but are not necessarily limited to, moderate exposure to or release of radioactive material licensed by the NRC or a state agency; major degradation of safety-related equipment; or major deficiencies in design, construction, use of or management controls for facilities or radioactive material at NRC-licensed facilities.

For FY 2011, there was one abnormal occurrence at an NRC-licensed nuclear power reactor. This occurred on Oct. 23, 2010, at the Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant, Unit 1, with the failure of a low-pressure coolant injection flow control valve, part of the reactor's residual heat removal system. Although no event occurred and the public was never in danger, the NRC determined that the valve failure caused a weakness in the licensee's fire mitigation strategy, increasing the likelihood of core damage in event of a major fire. The determination resulted in a red finding under the NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, for a finding of high safety significance.

Of the 23 abnormal occurrences involving radioactive materials, two of the events involved exposure of an embryo or fetus, one event involved an exposure to the extremities of a radiographer, and a fourth involved a stolen gamma radiography camera. The remaining 19 events involved misadministration of radioactive material during diagnostic or therapeutic procedures. Thousands of such procedures are conducted in U.S. medical facilities each year. Nine of the abnormal occurrences actually occurred in prior fiscal years, but NRC's investigations were closed during FY 2011.

The report details investigations of each incident by the NRC, Agreement States and licensees, as well as measures taken to ensure such incidents do not recur.

A section on "other items of interest" discusses three events that did not meet the criteria to be classified as abnormal occurrences but are included in the report because of high public and media interest. These are the Japanese event at Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant, flooding at Fort Calhoun plant in Nebraska, and the August 2011 earthquake near the North Anna plant in Virginia.

The report on abnormal occurrences for fiscal year 2011 is published as NUREG-0090, Vol. 34. It was transmitted to Congress on May 31 and is available on the NRC website at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr0090/v34/>. It will soon be published in the *[Federal Register](#)*.

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