

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION – REGION III

August 16, 2012

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE – PNO-III-12-008

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. Some of the information may not yet be fully verified or evaluated by the Region III staff.

Facility

Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, Unit 1
Northern States Power Company, Minnesota
Welch, Minnesota
Docket No: 50-282
License No: DPR-42

Licensee Emergency Classification

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

SUBJECT: PRAIRIE ISLAND UNIT 1 UNPLANNED SHUTDOWN DUE TO BOTH
EMERGENCY DIESEL GENERATORS BEING DECLARED INOPERABLE

Description:

On August 14, 2012, at 04:30 a.m. CDT, Prairie Island Unit 1 commenced a reactor shutdown due to both emergency diesel generators being declared inoperable. Unit 1 has two emergency diesel generators; each generator is capable of supplying electrical power to plant equipment in the event of a loss of offsite electrical power. Both generators were declared inoperable due to evidence of a small candle sized flame on each diesel occurring during testing. Unit 2 was unaffected by this event.

Prior to the shutdown, the licensee had taken one of the switchyard transformers out-of-service for planned maintenance. This transformer supplied power to non-safety related equipment normally used to cool the reactor during full power operation. While the transformer was out-of-service, power to these pumps was being provided by the main generator. Essentially, some of the electricity being produced by the plant was used to supply power to the pumps while the rest was sent out onto the offsite grid. Offsite power to the safety-related equipment was still available via an alternate transformer.

Once the reactor was shutdown, the main generator was unable to provide power to the non-safety related pumps. This required the plant to use the safety-related, backup systems (which were being supplied by offsite power) to continue cooling the reactor. This is an allowable method in which the auxiliary feedwater pumps are used to supply non-radioactive water to the steam generators and the non-radioactive steam from the generators is released to the atmosphere.

The plant is currently in a stable shutdown condition. The licensee is working on repairing the diesel generators. NRC Resident Inspectors responded to the control room during the reactor shutdown and continue to monitor the repairs and assess plant conditions.

This preliminary notification is issued for information only. State and local officials have been informed. The site issued a press release on August 14, 2012, describing the event.

The information presented herein has been discussed with the licensee, and is current as of at 9:00 a.m. CDT, on August 16, 2012, This preliminary notification is issued for information only and no further action by the staff is anticipated.

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