

Making an Emergency Notification to the NRC

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) headquarters operations officers (HOOs) receive emergency notification calls from the licensee, as required in Title 10 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* (10 CFR) 50.72, “Immediate Notification Requirements for Operating Nuclear Power Reactors.” The licensee’s caller (communicator) provides information about the event to the HOO. If needed, the HOO will ask for additional information to understand the event more fully and make an initial determination on the significance of the situation. Any questions during the initial communications should not distract a licensee from implementing timely safety or security measures.

Hostile/Threat Situations

- ❖ If an event is hostile in nature, the caller should tell the HOO the name of the facility, the type of event (physical, cyber, etc.), the status of the event (anticipated, occurred, ongoing, etc.), and any other information he or she can safely provide. If conditions warrant, the HOO will instruct the caller to hang up, **get to a safe place**, and call back as soon as possible—but only when it is safe to do so.
- ❖ The NRC will likely activate its response organization and staff in the regional Incident Response Center and Headquarters Operations Center to monitor the situation and make notifications to other licensees and agencies, as appropriate.

Background Regulatory Documents

10 CFR 50.72 and associated Statements of Consideration, NUREG-1022, Information Notice 85-80, and RIS 2009-10

Operations-Based Events

After making an emergency notification to the NRC, the HOO will make an initial assessment to determine whether the situation warrants consideration for activating the NRC’s response organization. Any event resulting in an Emergency Action Level declaration automatically warrants consideration for activating the NRC’s response organization.

- ❖ If the HOO determines the situation warrants consideration for an NRC response, the HOO will place the licensee’s communicator on hold and will call the appropriate NRC Regional Administrator (or designee) and the Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation (or designee) to inform them of the event. These senior managers, known as the NRC’s decisionmakers, are responsible for determining the NRC’s response to the event.
- ❖ After the briefing from the HOO, the NRC decisionmakers will likely want to speak directly with the licensee’s communicator to clarify the information or to request additional information.
- ❖ The HOO will connect the licensee’s communicator to the NRC’s decisionmakers to enable direct communication between the facility and the NRC. This communication will assist in determining the NRC’s response posture.
- ❖ The NRC has 30 minutes from the time of the official notification to determine whether it will activate its incident response program.

How to Have a Successful Call with the NRC Decisionmakers

The licensee communicator’s knowledge of the plant **and** basic understanding of the event will enable the communicator to readily answer questions from the NRC decisionmakers.

- ❖ If the licensee’s communicator is not knowledgeable of the event or the plant’s response to the event, the call may not go smoothly. If the communicator is not well informed, he or she will likely need to seek out the additional information and relay the answer(s) back to the NRC decisionmakers. This will delay the NRC’s independent assessment of the emergency and decision regarding the NRC’s response posture.
- ❖ Compliance with applicable guidance to have someone **knowledgeable of the event** communicate with the NRC’s decisionmakers is critical to timely and effective decisionmaking.

Conditions That Will Likely Cause the NRC To Respond to an Event

- ❖ event classification of Site Area Emergency, General Emergency, or Alert with degrading conditions
- ❖ hostile situation anticipated or in progress
- ❖ anticipated transient without scram event or reactor scram with rods not fully inserted
- ❖ ongoing event with degrading conditions
- ❖ natural phenomena significantly affecting the site or multiple sites

Sample Questions

The questions asked on a decisionmaker call will vary depending on the event. The decisionmakers will likely want to know the answers to some, or all, of the following questions:

- ❖ What is the current status of the reactor?
- ❖ If an automatic or manual scram was experienced, did all rods insert and systems respond as designed?
- ❖ Did safety system(s) actuate?
 - If so, which systems and are the systems still operating?
- ❖ Is the event or situation fully understood?
 - If not, what information is unknown or not yet understood? (For example, the reactor coolant system (RCS) leakage rate exceeds the technical specifications limit and the source of the leak remains unidentified.)
- ❖ Is the event or situation ongoing?
 - If so, is it fully controlled? (For example, RCS leakage is present, but the level is being maintained through makeup water to the RCS.)
- ❖ If the event or situation is ongoing, is it improving or degrading?
- ❖ Is reactor cooling being maintained and are pressures and water levels controlled?
- ❖ Are mitigating measures being implemented?
 - If so, what measures are being taken?

- ❖ Is anything currently challenging or preventing mitigation of the event or situation?
 - If so, what and how?
- ❖ How long do you expect it to take to fully mitigate the event or situation?
- ❖ What needs to occur for the emergency situation to be terminated?
- ❖ Has there been an increase in radiation levels inside the plant or on site?
 - If so, what are the levels and where are they detected?
 - What protective measures have been implemented or planned on site?
 - Is the control room habitable?
- ❖ Has site security been affected or compromised?
- ❖ Has anyone been injured during the event or situation?
- ❖ Has onsite or offsite first responder support been requested (emergency medical services, fire brigade, law enforcement, etc.)?
- ❖ What is the licensee's response posture?
 - Is the site emergency response organization being staffed?
- ❖ Is a site accountability or evacuation order planned or underway?
- ❖ Are there any communications or staffing issues?
- ❖ Has access to and from the site been compromised (because of physical or radiological conditions)?

Power Reactor Emergency Notification Communication Guidance (10 CFR 50.72)

“NRC headquarters operations officer, how may I help you?”



So, you are making an emergency notification call to the NRC—what happens next?



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