

Wisconsin Electric
A WISCONSIN ENERGY COMPANY

231 W Michigan St., Milwaukee, WI 53203

Post-It® Fax Note	7571	Date	5-28	# of pages	2
To	Jan Strasteg	From	M. Carpenter		
Co./Dept.		Co.			
Phone #		Phone #	(414) 221-4444		
Fax #	708-515-1596	Fax #			

EWVSE: 414.221.4444
221.2884

From: Mary Carpenter
May 28, 1996

Wisconsin Electric suspends loading of spent fuel containers after combustible gas causes brief gas burn

TWO CREEKS, Wis. -- Loading of spent nuclear fuel into dry storage containers was halted at Point Beach Nuclear Plant after combustible gas was detected and caused a brief gas burn during a welding procedure early this morning.

Fuel assemblies had been placed into a container and removed from the spent fuel pool. While a shield lid was being mechanically welded to the top of the container, combustible gas was detected and a brief gas burn occurred. Point Beach employees discontinued the welding procedure. No one was injured and there was no risk to the general public. The occurrence did not result in any release of radiation.

"We are conducting a thorough investigation and we will not resume loading spent fuel until we have a clear understanding of the cause of the gas burn," said Bob Link, vice president of nuclear power for Wisconsin Electric. "We will thoroughly review all of the related information to determine the root cause of this morning's occurrence."

Plant employees successfully loaded a container last week and moved it to the on-site dry storage facility a half-mile northwest of the plant after receiving authority from the PSCW earlier this month. One other container was loaded in December 1995. Loading was suspended earlier this year while the PSCW addressed several procedural issues raised by a Dane County Circuit Court judge.

Storing fuel in dry storage canisters outside the plant is necessary because Point Beach is running out of room in its spent fuel pool.

Wisconsin Electric Power Co., a subsidiary of Wisconsin Energy Corp., provides electric natural gas and/or steam service to about 2.3 million people in southeastern Wisconsin (including the Milwaukee area), the Appleton area, the Prairie du Chien area, and portions of northeastern Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

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A brief gas burn occurred when the bottom lid of #2 was being welded to #1.

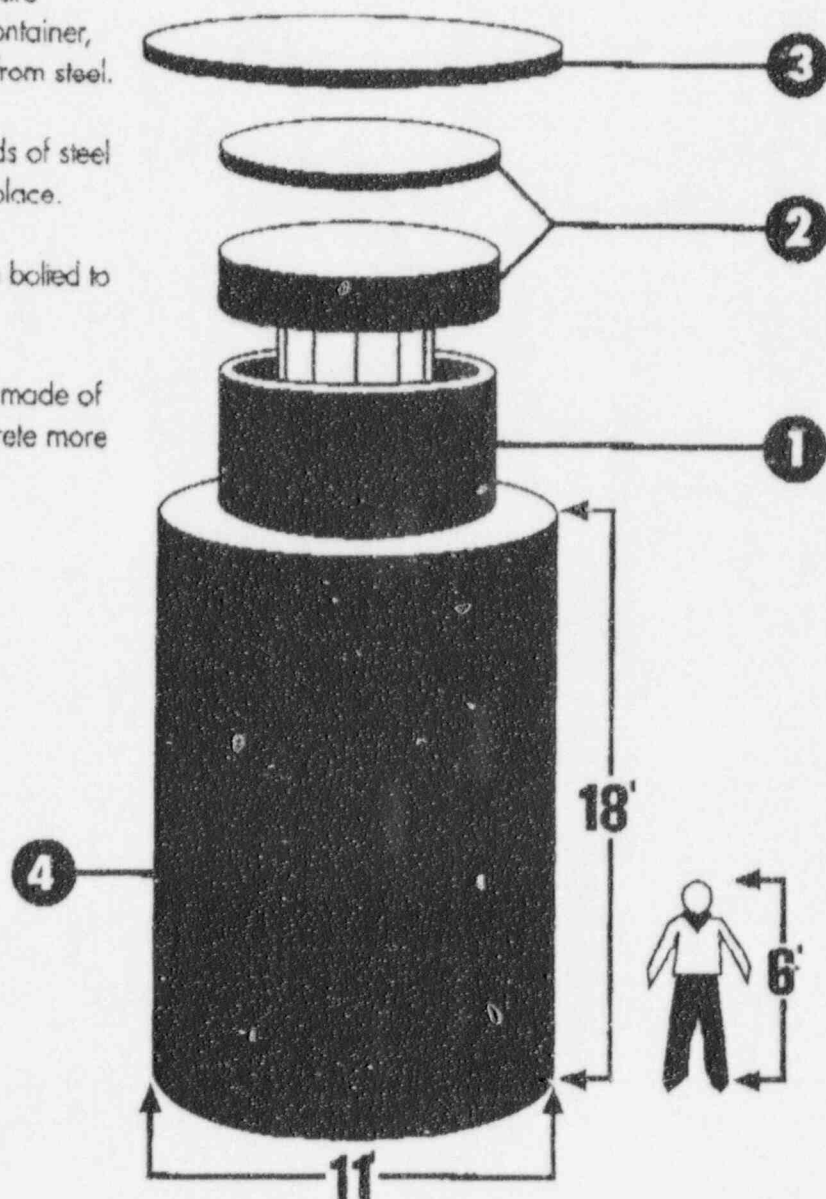
Dry storage casks

① Spent fuel rods are stored in the inner container, which is fabricated from steel.

② Two separate lids of steel are then welded in place.

③ A third lid is then bolted to the concrete cask.

④ Outer walls are made of steel-reinforced concrete more than 2 feet thick.



May 28, 1996

PRELIMINARY NOTIFICATION OF EVENT OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE PNO-III-96-033

This preliminary notification constitutes EARLY notice of events of POSSIBLE safety or public interest significance. The information is as initially received without verification or evaluation, and is basically all that is known by Region III staff (Lisle, Illinois) on this date.

Facility
Wisconsin Electric Power Co.
Point Beach 1 2
Two Rivers, Wisconsin
Dockets: 50-266, 50-301

Licensee Emergency Classification
Notification of Unusual Event
Alert
Site Area Emergency
General Emergency
X Not Applicable

Subject: UNIDENTIFIED GAS IGNITED DURING SPENT FUEL CASK WELDING

At 2:45 a.m. (CDT) on May 28, 1996, an unidentified gas ignited inside a dry cask spent fuel storage container during initiation of welding the shield lid inside the container. The container had been loaded with spent fuel and removed from the spent fuel storage pool. The gas ignition, which was heard and observed by plant technicians, displaced the shield lid, leaving it in place but tipped at a slight angle -- with one edge about 1 inch higher than normal. The shield lid is 9 inches thick and weighs about 4,400 pounds.

The VSC-24 cask was removed from the spent fuel storage pool about 4:10 p.m. on May 27 and placed in the cask decontamination area in the auxiliary building. The cask remained filled with water, and about 30 gallons was removed to create an air space under the shield lid. A welding machine is used to weld the shield lid in place. The gaseous ignition occurred during initiation of welding, but before any welding took place.

There was no evidence of any damage to the spent fuel in the cask as a result of the gaseous ignition. Continuous air measurements in the cask decontamination area showed no measurable radioactivity. There were no injuries.

The licensee is investigating the incident and is attempting to identify the gas which ignited. After a preliminary investigation, the licensee plans to return the cask to the spent fuel storage pool for further examination. The licensee is continuing to monitor for radioactivity and combustible gases.

The NRC senior resident inspector responded to the plant site after being notified of the event and is continuing to monitor the licensee's activities. Additional inspectors are being sent to the site from the regional office.

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This is the third VSC-24 cask loaded by the licensee. The other two casks have been placed on the outdoor storage pad. Each cask holds 24 fuel assemblies.

The licensee plans to issue a news release. The State of Wisconsin will be notified. The information in this preliminary notification has been reviewed with licensee management.

Region III (Chicago) was notified of this event by the resident inspector at 3:40 a.m. on May 28, 1996. This information is current as of 10 a.m. on May 28, 1996.

Contact: TIMOTHY KOBTEZ
(414)755-2309

MARTIN FARBER
(708)829-9605