

February 14, 1977

NOTICE OF NON-ROUTINE EVENT INVOLVING AGREEMENT STATE OR
AGREEMENT MATERIALS-77-02A

This NOTICE constitutes an early report of events occurring in an Agreement State 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 State Agreements Program staff as of 12:00 noon on date of this notification. IT SHOULD BE SPECIFICALLY NOTED THAT THIS NOTICE MAY CONTAIN INFORMATION THAT LATER MAY BE DETERMINED TO BE INACCURATE OR INCONSISTENT.

AGREEMENT STATE: New Mexico

FACILITY: United Nuclear-Honestake Partners Uranium Mill

SUBJECT: Broken Uranium Mill Tailings Dam

This is an update of Notice of Non-Routine Event 77-02 dated February 8, 1977.

On February 11, 1977 the State of New Mexico issued an order to the subject licensee prohibiting discharge of slurry to that portion of the tailings pond where the dam break occurred (East portion), requiring the licensee to submit plans for recovery of slimes and sludge, plans for repair of the tailings dam break, emergency plans for coping with possible future breaks, submission of a stability analysis of the tailings dam and submission of a report on clean up activities. The closest approach of released material to an off-site area was about 1/8 mile.

The order allowed the licensee to resume activities on February 12, 1977, utilizing the West portion of the tailings pond with additional restrictions on the type of couplings on the slurry line, installation of a pressure alarm in the slurry line, improved lighting of the area, increased personnel surveillance of the tailings area and a limit on the liquid level in the West tailings pond. The West portion is physically separated from the East pond. The adequacy of the licensee's proposal for resuming operations was evaluated by technical staff of the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Agency and the State Engineers Office. A State employee will be on the site each day to monitor the progress of the licensee's actions.

The State has advised other uranium mill licensees of this occurrence and requested submission of new plans for coping with similar emergencies. The staff has been in daily contact with State officials and has kept IE and NMSS informed. Other Agreement States with active uranium mills have been informed of the occurrence.

We plan to meet with the State to review this event in mid March.

Contact: G. Wayne Kerr, 492-7767; E. P. Resner - 492-7767

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Non-Routine Event File (Orig & 1 carbon)

New Mexico file (yellow)

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