

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road King of Prussia, PA 19406
Fax: 610/337-5241
Internet: dps@nrc.gov or nas@nrc.gov

I-99-6

January 14, 1999

Contact: Diane Screnci (610/337-5330) FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Neil A. Sheehan (610/337-5331)

NRC MONITORING UNUSUAL EVENT AT FITZPATRICK PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is monitoring the situation at the James A. Fitzpatrick nuclear power plant at Scriba, N.Y., where a fire broke out about 1 p.m. today in a hydrogen storage area on the plant grounds.

The event did not affect safety systems. There were no radiation releases, and the plant is continuing to operate near full power.

The storage area is located several hundred feet away from the reactor building. The hydrogen, in compressed gas form, is stored in cylinders.

As a result of the fire, the plant's operator, the New York Power Authority, declared an "unusual event" at 1:13 p.m. An unusual event is the lowest of four emergency classifications used by the NRC. Two neighboring nuclear power plants, Nine Mile Point Units 1 and 2, also declared an unusual event, at 1:47 p.m., after several support buildings at those facilities were evacuated as a precaution.

At 2:05 p.m., the fire was brought under control when flames were extinguished. Firefighters are continuing to spray the tanks to prevent the blaze from reigniting. Plant operators plan to vent hydrogen that remains in the tanks to assure that the situation remains under control.

NRC is monitoring the utility's response to the incident, utilizing resident inspectors assigned to the Fitzpatrick plant and those who have been sent there from the Nine Mile Point plants. The agency activated its incident response center at the NRC Region I office in King of Prussia, Pa., and is following developments from its operations center at NRC headquarters in Rockville, Md.

#