

'Alert' Ends at Susquehanna Nuclear Plant

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The "alert" at the Susquehanna nuclear plant in Luzerne County near Berwick, Pa., ended at 5:26 p.m. EDT Monday (10/27) after plant operator PPL Susquehanna confirmed that oxygen levels returned to normal in a pump room related to the Unit 2 reactor, and plant workers shut off the flow of nitrogen that was being used to support maintenance work on water piping in the room.

"While we certainly will conduct a follow-up investigation of this incident, all indications are that plant personnel reacted professionally, as they are thoroughly trained to do," said Joe Scopelliti, public information manager for PPL Susquehanna. "We'd also like to thank county emergency management officials and volunteers who were on standby for several hours."

There were no injuries to plant workers as a result of the incident and no effects on the public. Both generating units at the plant continue to operate normally.

The alert -- the second lowest of the four emergency classifications established by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission for nuclear power plants -- was declared at 12:06 p.m. Monday when workers detected a decrease in the oxygen level during construction work.

Before the alert, plant personnel were using liquid nitrogen as part of planned work on piping associated with one of the plant's many safety systems.

When liquid nitrogen is used in an enclosed space, Scopelliti explained, PPL constantly monitors oxygen levels. Monitoring equipment indicated that oxygen levels in the room were decreasing, so workers immediately left the area. The plant's operating rules call for an "alert" to be declared in such a situation.

Workers used the plant's ventilation system, supplemented by fans, to return oxygen levels to normal in the pump room. That enabled workers to re-enter the room and restore the piping so that the source of liquid nitrogen could be shut off.

The Susquehanna plant, located in Luzerne County about seven miles north of Berwick, is owned jointly by PPL Susquehanna LLC and Allegheny Electric Cooperative Inc. and is operated by PPL Susquehanna.

PPL Susquehanna is one of PPL Corporation's generating facilities. Headquartered in Allentown, Pa., PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL) controls more than 11,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the United States, sells energy in key U.S. markets and delivers electricity to about 4 million customers in Pennsylvania and the United Kingdom. More information is available at <http://www.pplweb.com/>.

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