

Poor Fabrication of Stop Log Caused Martins Creek Fly Ash Leak; Biological Assessment Shows No Short-Term Effects

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An in-depth evaluation of the fly ash leak from Basin #4 at PPL's Martins Creek power plant has determined that faulty fabrication of a wooden stop log led to a failure 16 years after it was installed.

Dennis Murphy, vice president of PPL Eastern Fossil and Hydro plants, said Tuesday (11/15) that the stop logs that held back water and fly ash in the basin were cut improperly.

"For the stop logs to stack properly, it is necessary to cut notches in the wood to accommodate the lifting lugs for the log below," said Murphy. "Unfortunately, the cuts in the stop logs - and in particular the one that failed - were deeper than specified."

The improper cut, Murphy said, created a structural weakness in the stop log that failed Aug. 23. As a result, an estimated 100 million gallons of water and fly ash flowed from the basin onto surrounding land and into the Delaware River.

He said the company has replaced the wooden stop logs with steel-reinforced concrete ones and has made improvements to the basin so that there are four barriers to stop the flow of water, if necessary.

Robert Barkanic, director of the Martins Creek cleanup project, also announced Tuesday that an independent biological assessment by Normandeau Associates of Drumore, Pa., has determined that the fly ash release had no short-term detrimental effects on the river or surrounding area.

"There were no detectable short-term impacts to the Delaware River fish community composition or integrity in locations exposed to the fly ash slurry," said Normandeau Associates, a firm with nationwide experience in assessing river habitats.

Normandeau's report also noted that there were no detectable short-term impacts on the benthic macroinvertebrate community on the river bottom. These organisms, which include mussels, snails and the immature forms of aquatic insects such as stonefly and mayfly nymphs, are a key part of the river's biology.

Normandeau will now begin conducting a long-term assessment of the river. In addition, the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia is conducting an independent evaluation of Normandeau's work.

Barkanic said the company continues to monitor both river water and residential wells near the Martins Creek plant. River water samples continue to show that levels of arsenic and other ash constituents of concern are well below the current state and federal surface water standards. Residential well testing shows water quality to be well within federal and state drinking water standards.

Root Cause Analysis

Murphy said a specially appointed team of experienced PPL employees, working with an outside expert on accident analysis, conducted a root cause examination of the incident.

In addition to pinpointing the cause of the incident, the team found that some notifications, both internally and externally, did not meet PPL's standards and that personnel inside the company had not anticipated the possibility of a failure of this sort at the basin.

"This report - which was prepared by people who do not work at Martins Creek and were not involved in the event - clearly shows that this incident was inconsistent with PPL's high operational standards," said Murphy.

"Improvement only comes when we face up to the need to change," he said. "It is appropriate to share this

information with the public to demonstrate our commitment to doing the right thing, and to living up to our obligations. We are committed to re-earning the trust and confidence of the public."

The report makes a series of recommendations, including an examination of all the company's ash basins. One other company ash basin of similar design already has been modified to prevent an uncontrolled release.

Other recommendations include development of guidelines for future use of stop logs, and improvements to design, quality control and significant-event analysis processes. PPL already is pursuing the recommendations in the report.

The full text of the report and the biological assessment are available at <http://www.martinscreekcleanup.com/>. Copies of the report and the biological assessment also will be available at the Lower Mount Bethel Township and Harmony Township buildings.

"As we have said since Aug. 23, this event is not typical of the way PPL does business and we will make things right," said Barkanic. "Working with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and other interested parties, we will continue our efforts to determine where the remaining ash is after the recent high-river flows, and to clean it up."

The company is estimating that the repairs and cleanup will cost about \$33 million.

PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL), headquartered in Allentown, Pa., controls about 12,000 megawatts of generating capacity in the United States, sells energy in key U.S. markets and delivers electricity to about 5 million customers in Pennsylvania, the United Kingdom and Latin America. More information is available at <http://www.pplweb.com/>.

SOURCE: PPL Corporation

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