



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES CONFIRMATORY ORDER TO HONEYWELL

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a Confirmatory Order to Honeywell International, Inc., outlining actions the company must take before it can resume its uranium conversion operations at the Honeywell Metropolis Works facility.

Honeywell Metropolis Works takes milled uranium and converts it into uranium hexafluoride gas which is then enriched at other facilities to make fuel for commercial power reactors. The Metropolis, Ill., facility has been shut down since May 9.

The plant will not be allowed to resume operations until the provisions outlined in the Confirmatory Order are satisfied.

“These measures ensure the continued safety of the people who work at Honeywell as well as those who live nearby,” said Victor McCree, the NRC’s Region II Administrator. “Their safety has been and will continue to be our primary objective.”

During an inspection in May that examined how the facility would fare in a major earthquake or a tornado, the NRC concluded that such an event could result in a higher risk to the public than originally assumed. The inspection identified that process equipment in the facility lacks seismic restraints, support and bracing that would assure integrity during a significant seismic or wind event. Specifically, the amount of uranium hexafluoride that could be released into the environment should the process equipment be damaged by such an event could be significantly larger than assumed in the facility’s Emergency Response Plan. The material that could be released poses more of a chemical hazard than a radiation hazard.

There is no current safety concern at the facility since it is shut down. In a shutdown configuration, a seismic event or a tornado would not result in a significant release of material.

The NRC identified two apparent violations associated with the inspection findings. Honeywell’s Emergency Response Plan, submitted in May 2005, failed to identify accident sequences related to credible seismic and tornado events. In addition, the plant’s Integrated Safety Analysis Summary erroneously states that “the plant is designed to withstand [significant] earthquake[s] with no safety implications.”

Due, in part, to Honeywell's cooperation and stated commitment to protect workers and public safety, the NRC decided to issue a Confirmatory Order in lieu of a Notice of Violation and consideration of civil penalties.

The company is required to revise its Emergency Response Plan and its Integrated Safety Analysis, ensuring that both define and provide the safety bases for its improved seismic and wind design. The facility is required to implement modifications Honeywell proposed as necessary to ensure the facility can safely withstand such events. The design and installation of the modifications are subject to NRC inspections.

A copy of the Confirmatory Order will be available on the NRC website at adams.nrc.gov/wba by using the number ML12289A800 or by contacting the Region II Office of Public Affairs.

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