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# Indian Point emergency preparation tested during simulation

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BUCHANAN - By 8 a.m. yesterday, those participating in the simulated emergency at Indian Point had an idea of what would go wrong in the exercise.

Mock radiation levels had spiked dangerously on control room monitors at Indian Point 2, and according to the simulation, workers heard unusual noises from the nuclear reactor.

By the end of the every-other-year exercise, a plume of radioactive particles had escaped the containment area and spread toward West Point on 10-mile-an-hour winds, leaving local residents in the pathway exposed to contamination but not enough to be considered dangerous.

Yesterday's exercise has not fully been reviewed, but federal officials on hand to evaluate the region's preparedness for such an emergency expect to have a preliminary report ready for the public by Friday.

"I don't know (how it went)," said Craig Conklin, a top official for the Federal Emergency Management Agency when the exercise was winding down. "I'm still interpreting."

Conklin joined Robert Stephan, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's assistant secretary for infrastructure protection and hundreds of other federal and state evaluators spread out in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam and Orange counties to test the region's emergency response capabilities.

To the casual observer, the day's activities were a combination of control and tension.

Plant officials ran through procedures that are practiced routinely, including working in a duplicate control room for Indian Point that is used only for training.

Nuclear Regulatory Commission and FEMA officials watched

## Mock timeline for the simulated radiological exercise

**7:49 a.m.** Workers at Indian Point hear some noise in the reactor and notice radiation rising above acceptable levels. There is "significant damage" to metal tubes that hold radioactive fuel pellets in place.

**8:10 a.m.** County emergency operations centers up and running across the 10-mile emergency planning zone around the plant.

**8:12 a.m.** Indian Point sends e-mails to 150 members of the media declaring an "alert," the next-to-the-lowest of four levels of warning. There has been no release of radiation and no threat to the public, including workers.

**9 a.m.** The plant is shut down, as the "event" escalates and more water is coming out of the reactor cooling system at more than 75 gallons a minute, due to two valves that stuck open. The containment building is the last line of defense before there is a radiological release.

**9:11 a.m.** Public parks are closed

**9:12 a.m.** Westchester County officials start evacuating schools in Briarcliff Manor, Peekskill, Somers and four other districts with buses. Children "sheltered" in places outside of the 10-mile evacuation zone in communities such as Valhalla.

individuals doing their jobs, noting without comment what was done when and by whom.

The only evidence of the exercise throughout the day at the plant as well as at the state's Joint Information Center in Hawthorne was a mantra spoken by everyone at the beginning of each phone call or statement to the press - "This is a drill."

Other than that, engineers, emergency officials, public information officers and others waited for the next pretend problem to be thrown at them.

"When you're a participant in one of these, you get caught up in the moment," said Michael Slobedien, Indian Point's top emergency preparedness official. "When you're in it, it's real. It's not a game."

With 20 million people in a 50-mile radius of Indian Point, the most densely populated area surrounding any nuclear plant in the nation, preparations for such large-scale events as busing school children or evacuating entire towns need to be complex and rehearsed in as real-life conditions as possible, officials and opponents say.

Critics of Indian Point yesterday watched much of the comings and goings at the Hawthorne information center, where pretend press briefings took place and counties updated each other via video conferencing.

"My reaction is that there's a high degree of professionalism," said Lisa Rainwater, the Indian Point campaign coordinator for the environmental group Riverkeeper. "I not exactly sure they're testing what needs to be tested in this day and age."

Federal officials did not include a terrorist attack yesterday; they said that was tested last time, when the exercise called for a plane to be flown into a containment building.

Members of Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition, a group that has called repeatedly for the plant to be closed, were especially critical that two of their efforts to inject additional mock obstacles to overcome - including calling in to say a small plane had damaged the Tappan Zee Bridge - were not incorporated into the drill.

Federal officials set the guidelines for the training exercise and kept to the script yesterday.

Rainwater wondered why the release was "blown" north when the larger populations are in other directions.

Indian Point's Slobedien said FEMA had criteria they wanted to test, including ensuring that all four counties were in the plume's path and that West Point was part of the exercise as well.

He said radiation releases heading south or toward larger populations have been tested in the past.

The NRC and FEMA meeting with the public is set for Friday 2 p.m. Friday, at Charles Point's Crystal Bay restaurant.

At that time, both agencies will go over their report cards for the exercise. Should there be significant deficiencies, the two agencies could require a repeat of the drill.

**9:14 a.m.** Emergency sirens sound across the four counties in the 10-mile zone.

**9:40 a.m.** Gov. Pataki declares a state of emergency.

**10 a.m.** The state's Joint Information Center in Hawthorne opens, staffed with individuals from Indian Point and the state's emergency management office, and linked via video conferences to the Orange, Rockland and Putnam counties. Westchester staff on site. Mock reporters begin gathering for official briefings.

**10:37 a.m.** Teams are dispatched to monitor air for radiation levels.

**11:08 a.m.** Schools near the site complete relocation.

**11:22 a.m.** "General Emergency" declared at Indian Point as radiation gets out of the containment area and becomes airborne. Wind is out of the south at 10 miles per hour. Monitors show exposure to about 8 millirem/hour. Average intake in a day is usually one millirem.

**12:16 p.m.** Public evacuations underway.

**12:51 p.m.** Counties advising residents to take potassium iodide, or KI, to cut potential health impacts of the radiation.

**2:10 p.m.** Plant operators close the valve releasing radioactive steam from one of the four steam generators, terminating the release to the environment.

To review the exercise, log on to the following:

<http://jic.semo.state.ny.us/>