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Wednesday, May 1, 1991

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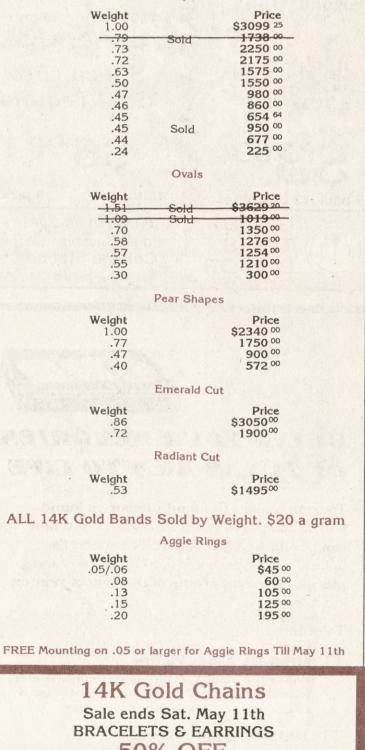
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Officials report no radiation leaks, injuries in Maine blaze Fire damages nuclear plant

WISCASSET, Maine (AP) — description of t Fire severely damaged the non- of the damage. nuclear part of the Maine Yankee nuclear power plant, officials said Tuesday. They said the reactor shut down normally, no ra-diation was released and nobody

was injured. U.S. Rep. Thomas Andrews accused Maine Yankee officials of withholding details about the fire's severity when it began Monday night. Plant officials denied trying to downplay it. "The public has a right to know exactly what occurred,"

said Andrews, a Maine Demo-crat. "They should be given all the details surrounding the accident and the ensuing investiga-tion as quickly as possible." On Monday night, Maine Yan-kee officials confirmed a fire had

broken out, but gave no indica-tion of its severity and said they could provide no details until Tuesday. Late Tuesday morning, the Nuclear Regulatory

description of the fire and details

The company said later Tues-day that the plant's main genera-tor may have sustained "serious damage" during the fire, but that it could be several days be-fore the evtent was known fore the extent was known.

Maine Yankee President Charles Frizzle said the fire was "probably the most serious event" at the plant in its 19 years. He stressed no one was injured and the blaze posed no danger to the public.

The fire began 6:32 p.m. Monday and was classified as an "un-usual event," the lowest of four ratings the NRC gives to nuclear plant incidents.

NRC spokeswoman Diane Screnci said that authorities on the scene reported "a loud boom" preceded the hydrogen fire, but she said investigators were unsure whether an explosion occurred.

The NRC's initial report of the Commission revealed the first incident said "reports were retiple hydrogen fires in the turbine hall."

Charles Marschall, the NRC's Officials were investigating senior resident inspector at the the source of the fire, which oc-Charles Marschall, the NRC's plant, said the fire was fueled by plant's main transformer, electri-cal conductors and wires leading within a 4½-foot wall of concrete from the generator to the transformer.

plant, the company said.

"I don't want to downgrade cials said. the seriousness of the event, but it's not a nuclear event," Frizzle said at a news conference Tues-day afternoon. "From my per-spective, this should not reflect

negatively on the use of nuclear power. It has nothing to do with a coolant for the generator.

ficials replace the transformer. If the generator, officials said.

ceived of an explosion in the the generator is inoperable, the main transformer and of mul- plant may be down for several months while a new generator is installed, Frizzle said

curred 100 to 200 feet from the hydrogen and damaged the containment building that enreinforced with steel.

The transformer feeds electric-ity produced by the plant to the mally when the main trans-transmission system outside the former failed and the reactor shut down automatically, offi-

> Frizzle said the fire probably began with a fault, or short, in the transformer or sparks in the generator that could have ignited hydrogen, which is used as

nuclear power." "Both scenarios are equally If the generator is not dam-aged, the plant will be shut down for several weeks while of-ficials reals are the transformer If



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