

Emergency Classifications

Few events at nuclear facilities are actual emergencies. If one were to occur, the facility operators, based on predetermined guidelines, would decide how serious it is.

There are four emergency levels:

1. Unusual Event

It is the least serious classification. It means there is a minor problem at the facility being handled by facility workers. Because of strict federal rules, such events are reported to local, state and federal officials. Unusual Events do not typically involve a release of radiation.

2. Alert

It is an event that could affect facility safety. County, state and federal officials may activate emergency centers and monitor the situation.

3. Site Area Emergency

It is an event that could affect the safety of the public near the facility. Public officials will tell you what actions, if any, you should take.

4. General Emergency

It is the most serious classification. Local officials will tell people in affected areas what actions to take for their safety.

At a Site Area Emergency, sirens may direct evacuation in these areas:

- The Columbia River between Vernita Bridge and Leslie Groves Park
- Wahluke Hunting Area
- Ringold Fishing Area
- Rattlesnake Mountain Shooting Facility
- Horn Rapids Park and nearby recreational areas in Benton County
- Off-Road Vehicle Park in Richland
- Schools within 10 miles of Columbia Generating Station

At a General Emergency, residents throughout the EPZ will receive direction on what, if any protective actions are needed.

Sirens will activate, followed by an audible message telling residents what actions to take. Listen to the emergency instructions carefully and keep your radio tuned to the primary Emergency Alert System radio stations, KONA 610 AM or 105.3 FM, KORD 102.7 FM, or KZHR 92.5 FM (Spanish language).

REMEMBER: Notification of an emergency at Columbia Generating Station or a Department of Energy nuclear facility does not always mean you should evacuate. Follow your county official's instructions. You may not need to do anything.

