

# MWVG

Midwest Generation, LLC  
Will County Generating Station

## 2021 Hazard Potential Classification Assessment for South Ash Pond 2 & South Ash Pond 3



Revision 0

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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**Table of Contents ..... i**

**1.0 Purpose & Scope.....1**

    1.1 Purpose..... 1

    1.2 Scope..... 1

**2.0 Inputs.....2**

**3.0 Assumptions.....4**

**4.0 Methodology .....4**

**5.0 Assessment .....5**

    5.1 Summary of Initial Hazard Potential Classification Assessment ..... 5

    5.2 Changes in Bases for Initial Hazard Potential Classifications ..... 6

    5.3 2021 Hazard Potential Classification Assessment ..... 7

**6.0 Conclusions .....8**

**7.0 Certification .....9**

**8.0 References .....10**

**Appendix A: 2016 Hazard Potential Classification Assessment for South Ash Ponds 2 & 3**

## 1.0 PURPOSE & SCOPE

### 1.1 PURPOSE

South Ash Pond 2 and South Ash Pond 3 at Midwest Generation, LLC's (MWG) Will County Generating Station ("Will County" or the "Station") are existing coal combustion residual (CCR) surface impoundments that are regulated by the Illinois Pollution Control Board's "Standards for the Disposal of Coal Combustion Residuals in CCR Surface Impoundments." These regulations are codified in Part 845 to Title 35 of the Illinois Administrative Code (35 Ill. Adm. Code 845, Ref. 1) and are also referred to herein as the "Illinois CCR Rule." Pursuant to 35 Ill. Adm. Code 845.440(a)(1), MWG must conduct and complete a hazard potential classification assessment that assigns hazard potential classifications to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 in accordance with the hazard potential classifications defined in 35 Ill. Adm. Code 845.120.

South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 are also regulated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's "Standards for the Disposal of Coal Combustion Residuals in Landfills and Surface Impoundments," 40 CFR Part 257 Subpart D (Ref. 2), also referred to herein as the "Federal CCR Rule." Pursuant to 40 CFR 257.73(f)(3), the Federal CCR Rule requires MWG to conduct and complete a hazard potential classification assessment in accordance with 40 CFR 257.73(a)(2) for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 every five years.

This report documents the 2021 hazard potential classification assessment conducted and completed in accordance with the Illinois and Federal CCR Rules by Sargent & Lundy (S&L) on behalf of MWG for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 at Will County. This report:

- Lists the inputs and assumptions used in the 2021 hazard potential classification assessment,
- Discusses the methodology used to conduct the 2021 hazard potential classification assessment,
- Lists and compares the definitions for the hazard potential classifications for CCR surface impoundments promulgated by the Illinois and Federal CCR Rules,
- Summarizes the results from the initial hazard potential classification assessment completed for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 that was conducted in accordance with the Federal CCR Rule,
- Evaluates potential changes to the factors used as the bases for the initial federal hazard potential classifications assigned to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 to determine whether revised federal hazard potential classifications are warranted, and
- Provides the 2021 hazard potential classifications for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 in accordance with 35 Ill. Adm. Code 845.440(a)(1) and 40 CFR 257.73(a)(2).

### 1.2 SCOPE

Per the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act, South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 will continue to be subject to both the Illinois and Federal CCR Rules until the U.S. EPA approves the Illinois

EPA's CCR permit program. The Illinois EPA has yet to publish a timeline for submitting its proposed CCR permit program to the U.S. EPA for approval, and so MWG must provide hazard potential classifications pursuant to both sets of regulations at this time.

## 2.0 INPUTS

### **Hazard Potential Classifications**

The Illinois CCR Rule (Ref. 1, § 845.120) defines “hazard potential classification” as “the possible adverse incremental consequences that result from the release of water or stored contents due to failure of the diked CCR surface impoundment or mis-operation of the diked CCR surface impoundment or its appurtenances.” The Illinois CCR Rule (Ref. 1, § 845.440(a)(1)) requires a CCR surface impoundment be designated as either a Class 1 CCR surface impoundment or a Class 2 CCR surface impoundment. Per 35 Ill. Adm. Code 845.120, the two Illinois hazard potential classifications are defined as follows:

- *Class 1 CCR surface impoundment* means a diked surface impoundment where failure or mis-operation will probably cause loss of human life.
- *Class 2 CCR surface impoundment* means a diked surface impoundment where failure or mis-operation results in no probable loss of human life, but can cause economic loss, environmental damage, disruption of lifeline facilities, or impact other concerns.

The Federal CCR Rule (Ref. 2, § 257.53) has the same definition for “hazard potential classification” as the Illinois CCR Rule. However, the Federal CCR Rule has three hazard potential classifications instead of the two designations promulgated by the Illinois CCR Rule. Per 40 CFR 257.53, the three federal hazard potential classifications are defined as follows:

- *High hazard potential CCR surface impoundment* means a diked surface impoundment where failure or mis-operation will probably cause loss of human life.
- *Low hazard potential CCR surface impoundment* means a diked surface impoundment where failure or mis-operation results in no probable loss of human life and low economic and/or environmental losses. Losses are principally limited to the surface impoundment owner's property.
- *Significant hazard potential CCR surface impoundment* means a diked surface impoundment where failure or mis-operation results in no probable loss of human life, but can cause economic loss, environmental damage, disruption of lifeline facilities, or impact other concerns.

Per the preceding sets of definitions for the federal and Illinois hazard potential classifications, a high hazard potential CCR surface impoundment per the Federal CCR Rule is the same as a Class 1 CCR surface impoundment per the Illinois CCR Rule. Similarly, a CCR surface impoundment that is classified as a low or significant hazard potential per the Federal CCR Rule is considered to be a Class 2 CCR surface impoundment per the Illinois CCR Rule.

### **Site Topography**

Two topographic datasets for South Ash Pond 2, South Ash Pond 3, and the surrounding areas were obtained: one from the U.S. Geological Survey's (USGS) National Elevation Dataset (NED) (Ref. 4) and one from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Digital Elevation Program (NDEP) (Ref. 5). The USGS dataset was published in 2011 and was utilized in the initial hazard potential classification assessment and the 2016 dike breach analysis. The USGS topography reflects elevation data collected in 2004 at a resolution of approximately 3 meters. Based on a review of the USGS NED, the 2004 USGS elevation dataset is the most recent topographic dataset in the NED at a 3-meter or better resolution for the Station and surrounding areas. Meanwhile, the USDA topography reflects elevation data collected in 2010 at a 1-meter resolution and was utilized in this 2021 assessment to determine whether the site topography referenced in the initial hazard potential classification assessment and the 2016 dike breach analysis should be updated.

### **Impacted Areas**

Areas impacted by a hypothetical failure at either South Ash Pond 2 or South Ash Pond 3 were obtained from the ponds' initial hazard potential classification assessment (Ref. 3), the dike breach analysis conducted in 2016 for the ponds' eastern dikes (Ref. 6), and the dike breach inundation maps prepared for the ponds' Emergency Action Plan (Ref. 7). The inputs, assumptions, and methodology utilized to identify areas impacted by failures at each of the ponds' dikes were evaluated to determine whether any updates to these analyses were warranted.

Appendix A provides the initial hazard potential classification assessment conducted by Geosyntec Consultants in 2016 for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3.

### **Aerial Images**

Historical and recent aerial images of the Station and surrounding areas were obtained from Google Earth Pro (Ref. 8).

### **Property Boundaries**

Boundaries for the Station's property and adjacent properties were obtained from the geographic information system (GIS) for Will County, Illinois (Ref. 9).

### **100-Year Floodway & Floodplain**

Delineations for the floodway and floodplain for the 1% annual chance flood ("100-year flood") at and downstream from the Will County site were obtained from the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the subject area (Ref. 10).

### **Ash Pond Conditions**

The operating and physical conditions for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 were based on discussions with MWG personnel.

## **3.0 ASSUMPTIONS**

There are no assumptions in this document that require verification.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY**

The bases for South Ash Pond 2's and South Ash Pond 3's initial hazard potential classifications as documented within the ponds' initial hazard potential classification assessment were reviewed to determine if any changes have occurred since the initial assessment was completed. Identified changes were then evaluated to determine if the ponds' previous hazard potential classifications warrant adjustments. Where no changes were noted for a given input, or where identified changes were determined to have no impact to the results and conclusions of the initial hazard potential classification assessment, the previous evaluation of that input was considered to still be valid for this 2021 assessment.

In instances where changes to one or more factors used as the bases for the initial hazard potential classifications were identified (e.g., downstream development that was not present in 2016), hypothetical dike breaches were considered at each of the two CCR surface impoundments to evaluate the impacts that a release of CCR and CCR wastewater would have on the identified factor(s). These hypothetical dike breaches were evaluated regardless of potential causes and/or apparent dike stability. When evaluating a hypothetical dike breach at a subject CCR surface impoundment, the solid waste materials in the CCR surface impoundment were conservatively considered as an equivalent volume of liquid, and the CCR surface impoundment was assumed to be entirely filled with liquid.

When evaluating the downstream impacts from a hypothetical dike breach at a CCR surface impoundment, the first consideration examined was whether a loss of human life is probable under the given hypothetical failure scenario. Loss of human life is the critical aspect of a federal high hazard potential classification. If a loss of human life is unlikely to occur, then the CCR surface impoundment was not considered to be a federal high hazard potential. In that case, the next consideration examined was the extent of environmental and economic losses resulting from the hypothetical dike breach. If the losses are low and principally contained to MWG's property, then the CCR surface impoundment was considered to be a federal low hazard potential. If the environmental and/or economic losses extend beyond MWG's property, then the CCR surface impoundment was considered to be a federal significant hazard potential.

After assigning federal hazard potential classifications to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3, Illinois CCR Rule hazard potential classifications (either Class 1 or Class 2) were assigned based on the assigned federal hazard potential classifications. An Illinois Class 1 hazard potential classification was assigned to a CCR surface impoundment if the pond was classified as a federal high hazard potential. Alternatively, the CCR surface impoundment was classified as an Illinois Class 2 hazard potential if the pond was classified as either a federal significant or low hazard potential.

## 5.0 ASSESSMENT

### 5.1 SUMMARY OF INITIAL HAZARD POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION ASSESSMENT

The initial hazard potential classification assessment for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 was completed in October 2016 and is included in its entirety in Appendix A. This assessment evaluated the potential consequences of hypothetical dike failures for both ponds. A quantitative dike breach analysis was also conducted for each pond's eastern dike which was determined to pose the most risk to human life due to the eastern dikes' proximities to occupied buildings and the adjacent topography sloping towards occupied buildings. The 2016 dike breach analysis also assumed that South Ash Pond 2, South Ash Pond 3, and other nearby, non-CCR surface impoundments were at capacity at the time of the hypothetical failure.

Per Figures 2 and 3 in Appendix A, the 2016 dike breach analysis concluded that the flood released through a hypothetical breach in the eastern dike of either South Ash Pond 2 or South Ash Pond 3 could impact several unoccupied buildings and one occupied building. The 2016 dike breach analysis also concluded that the combination of the estimated flood velocity and depth at the occupied building is within the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation's (USBR) "Low Danger Zone" (see Figure 4 in Appendix A). In its "Downstream Hazard Classification Guidelines" (Ref. 11), the USBR states that if the depth-velocity combination of a hazard (*e.g.*, flood) for a given area plots within the "Low Danger Zone," "the number of lives-in-jeopardy associated with possible downstream hazards is assumed to be zero." In other words, floods plotting within the USBR's "Low Danger Zone" are unlikely to cause a probable loss of human life. Therefore, the initial hazard potential classification assessment concluded that a failure at the eastern dike of either South Ash Pond 2 or South Ash Pond 3 would not result in a probable loss of human life.

Although a hypothetical failure at either South Ash Pond 2 or South Ash Pond 3 was determined to not cause a probable loss of human life, it was also determined that wastewater released from a breach at either pond's western dike would flow directly into the Des Plaines River and cause offsite environmental impacts. Therefore, South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 were both classified as significant hazard potential CCR surface impoundments.

## 5.2 CHANGES IN BASES FOR INITIAL HAZARD POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATIONS

### 5.2.1 CHANGES IN ASH POND OPERATIONS & EMBANKMENT GEOMETRY

In early October 2020, Will County took South Ash Pond 3 out of service for routine cleaning. In April 2021, MWG filed a notice of intent to close South Ash Pond 3 in accordance with the Federal CCR Rule's closure criteria (Ref. 2, § 257.102). Closure construction activities will commence at the pond upon receipt of a closure construction permit from the Illinois EPA in accordance with Subpart B of the Illinois CCR Rule. Meanwhile, Will County continues to operate South Ash Pond 2 to manage CCR wastestreams and various non-CCR wastestreams from the Station in accordance with 40 CFR 257.103(f)(1). Operating conditions at this pond have not changed since the pond's initial hazard potential classification assessment was conducted in 2016.

As previously mentioned in Section 5.1, South Ash Pond 3's 2016 hazard potential classification assessment examined hypothetical breach scenarios assuming the pond was at capacity; therefore, the assumed operating condition used for the initial assessment is conservative for the pond's current operating condition. Therefore, there is no basis to reevaluate the surface water elevations used to conduct the initial hazard potential classification assessment for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3.

Based on reviews of Google Earth aerial images (Ref. 8), there have been no significant modifications to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 (mass excavations, major embankment modifications, *etc.*) since the initial hazard potential classification assessment was completed. Therefore, there is no basis to reevaluate the embankment geometry for this 2021 assessment.

### 5.2.2 CHANGES IN SITE TOPOGRAPHY

When comparing the 2004 USGS topography (Ref. 4) used in the initial hazard potential classification assessment and the 2010 USDA elevation dataset for the area (Ref. 5), no significant differences in the topography adjacent to the ash ponds and within the dike breach impact areas were identified. This observation is further supported by Google Earth aerial images (Ref. 8), which indicate that there have been no significant modifications to the ground surfaces (mass excavations, mass fill placement, *etc.*) adjacent to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 or within the dike breach impact areas since 2010. Based on these observations, the topographic data used by the initial hazard potential classification assessment remains valid for this 2021 assessment.

### 5.2.3 CHANGES IN DOWNSTREAM PROPERTY DEVELOPMENTS

Based on reviews of Google Earth aerial images (Ref. 8) and the Will County, Illinois GIS (Ref. 9), no new buildings or transport corridors (roads, rail lines, *etc.*) have been constructed in the past five years within the dike breach impact areas identified in the initial hazard potential classification assessment. Thus, there is no



basis to reevaluate the potential impacts to the areas downstream of South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 for this 2021 assessment.

#### **5.2.4 CHANGES IN USBR DEPTH-VELOCITY FLOOD DANGER LEVELS**

The USBR has not updated the depth-velocity flood danger level relationships presented in its “Downstream Hazard Classification Guidelines” (Ref. 11) since the initial hazard potential classification assessment for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 was completed in 2016. Therefore, there is no basis to reevaluate the danger levels assigned to the occupied buildings identified within the inundation area downstream of the eastern dikes for South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 following a hypothetical breach at either pond.

#### **5.3 2021 HAZARD POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION ASSESSMENT**

Other than the change in the operational status of South Ash Pond 3, there have been no significant modifications to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3; no significant modifications to the topography adjacent to and downstream of these CCR surface impoundments; and no significant buildings or transport corridors that have been constructed in the areas downstream of the CCR surface impoundments that would be impacted by a hypothetical dike breach. There have also been no changes to the USBR’s depth-velocity flood danger level relationships, which were used in the 2016 hazard potential classification assessment. Moreover, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s *Engineering Guidelines for the Evaluation of Hydropower Projects*, which references FEMA’s *Federal Guidelines for Dam Safety* (Ref. 13), states that “the consequences of failure are not expected to cause a probable loss of human life when incremental effects on downstream structures are approximately two feet or less.” FEMA’s *Federal Guidelines for Inundation Mapping of Flood Risks Associated with Dam Incidents and Failures* (Ref. 14) also states that an incremental rise in flood depth of two feet or less caused by a dike breach is not considered to be a concern to human life. These two federal guidelines further support the conclusion that the loss of human life at the occupied building is not probable given that the initial dike breach analysis results show the estimated flood depth at this building is less than 2 feet. Therefore, the initial hazard potential classification assessment completed in 2016 for these CCR surface impoundments remains valid. In addition, the 2016 dike breach analysis for the ponds’ eastern dikes still represents the worst-case failure scenario for each pond since these dikes are the closest to occupied Station buildings.

Based on the preceding observations, the initial federal significant hazard potential classifications assigned to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 in accordance with 40 CFR 257.73(a)(2) and the bases for these assignments remain valid for this 2021 assessment. A loss of human life is unlikely to result from a hypothetical failure at these CCR surface impoundments, but potential offsite environmental damage could occur to the Des Plaines River. As discussed in Section 2.0, a CCR surface impoundment classified as a significant hazard potential per the Federal CCR Rule is considered to be an Illinois Class 2 CCR surface impoundment.

Therefore, South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 were classified as Class 2 CCR surface impoundments pursuant to 35 Ill. Adm. Code 845.440(a)(1).

## 6.0 CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation reviewed the factors and design inputs used as the bases for the initial hazard potential classification assessment completed in accordance with the Federal CCR Rule for Will County's South Ash Ponds 2 and 3. It was determined that no significant operational or physical changes to these CCR surface impoundments and no new downstream developments within the dike breach inundation areas have occurred within the last five years that would necessitate changing either pond's initial federal hazard potential classification. Therefore, the initial federal hazard potential classifications assigned to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 and the bases for these assignments remain valid for 2021. These federal hazard potential classifications were then used to determine the hazard potential classifications pursuant to the Illinois CCR Rule based on the similarities between the Federal and Illinois CCR Rules' hazard potential classifications for CCR surface impoundments.

Table 6-1 presents the 2021 hazard potential classifications assigned to South Ash Ponds 2 and 3 at Will County in accordance with 35 Ill. Adm. Code 845.440(a)(1) and 40 CFR 257.73(a)(2).

**Table 6-1 – 2021 Illinois & Federal Hazard Potential Classifications for South Ash Pond 2 & South Ash Pond 3 at the Will County Generating Station**

CCR Surface Impoundment	Illinois Hazard Potential Classification	Federal Hazard Potential Classification
South Ash Pond 2	Class 2	Significant
South Ash Pond 3	Class 2	Significant

## 7.0 CERTIFICATION

I certify that:

- This hazard potential classification assessment was prepared by me or under my direct supervision.
- The work was conducted in accordance with the requirements of 35 Ill. Adm. Code 845.440 and with the requirements of 40 CFR 257.73(a)(2).
- I am a registered professional engineer under the laws of the State of Illinois.

Certified By: Thomas J. Dehlin

Date: October 14, 2021

Seal:



*Th. J. Dehlin*  
10/14/2021  
Exp. 11/30/2021

## 8.0 REFERENCES

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**APPENDIX A: 2016 HAZARD POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION  
ASSESSMENT FOR SOUTH ASH PONDS 2 & 3**

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