



NRC NEWS

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

NRC RELEASES REPORT ON SPECIAL INSPECTION INTO MISSING MILLSTONE FUEL

A report summarizing the results of an NRC inspection regarding the loss of two spent fuel rods at the Millstone Unit 1 nuclear power plant has now been issued. The preliminary results of the inspection were discussed at a public meeting held at the plant on January 15.

Last October, the NRC dispatched a special inspection team to the Waterford, Conn., plant to evaluate the comprehensiveness of an investigation conducted by the plant's previous owner, Northeast Utilities (NU), into the possible whereabouts of the rods and the circumstances surrounding their loss. The NRC team spent several weeks on-site at the facility, which is now owned by Dominion Resources, and reviewed, among other things, NU's root-cause analysis.

The NRC team has determined that NU's investigation was thorough and it concurs with the company's conclusion that the missing fuel rods are most likely located in a licensed low-level radioactive waste facility. The NRC team has also concluded that it is highly unlikely that the rods, in their entirety, remain in the Millstone 1 spent fuel pool. Because of the radiological controls in place at any of the possible locations of the missing rods, the NRC believes there is no threat to public health.

There was no evidence found by the NRC team to support the possibility of theft or diversion of the rods. In addition, the NRC staff has concluded that adequate controls are currently in place to account for all of the special nuclear material at the Millstone facility, with the exception of the missing rods.

The NRC has determined that there were several apparent violations of NRC regulations with respect to the loss of the fuel. Any enforcement action determined to be appropriate as a result of the violations will be announced at a later date.

NU first reported to the NRC that it could not account for two spent fuel rods, which had been stored in the Millstone 1 spent fuel pool, on December 14, 2000. Company records indicated that the

rods were last verified to be in the pool in 1980, but there was no documentation of their presence in the pool beyond that time.

Ever since the notification by NU, the NRC has been closely following the company's efforts to find the missing fuel rods through on-site inspections and periodic conference calls. In addition, the agency has maintained a liaison with the appropriate states.

Copies of the NRC inspection report can be found in the agency's electronic document system (ADAMS), which can be accessed through the NRC's web site at www.nrc.gov, using the following accession number: ML020580132. Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC Public Document Room at (301) 415-4737 or 1-800-397-4209.

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