



NRC NEWS

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NRC to Conduct Special Inspection at University of Texas at Austin Research Reactor

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will conduct a special inspection to evaluate the use of improper fuel at the University of Texas at Austin's research reactor in Austin, Texas.

The university notified the NRC on Oct. 18 that the research reactor had been operating for several months with two fuel elements not licensed for the facility. The UT research reactor is authorized to use fuel covered in stainless steel. The facility had received similar fuel elements covered in aluminum in a 2004 shipment, and mistakenly installed two aluminum-clad elements during a core change in January 2022. The aluminum-clad fuel has been removed from the reactor and safely stored at the facility. A facility inspection of the aluminum-clad fuel showed no damage, and preliminary information indicates the fuel remained below the safe temperature limit for its design. Available information continues to satisfy the NRC that the UT facility remains safe.

Two inspectors from agency headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, will begin this inspection on Nov. 7, supplemented with additional inspectors and technical experts as needed. They will evaluate the adequacy of UT's response to the situation, the university's determination of the root cause of the event and the facility's corrective actions. The inspectors will also review information related to any impacts from the use of improper fuel prior to restart of the research reactor.

The inspectors will prepare a written report that will be issued about 30 days after the inspection is completed. The report will be publicly available through the NRC's electronic document database, [ADAMS](#). Help in using ADAMS is available through the NRC Public Document Room by calling 1-800-397-4209.