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NRC STAFF UPGRADES INVESTIGATION OF EMERGENCY
AT NINE MILE POINT UNIT 2

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has upgraded its investigation of conditions which led to a site area emergency August 13 at the Nine Mile Point Nuclear Power Plant Unit 2 near Oswego, NY.

Initially the NRC dispatched a seven-member Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) to the plant. As a result of the initial work of that team, NRC's Executive Director for Operations, James Taylor, has decided that a more specialized investigative group, known as an Incident Investigation Team (IIT), should be formed to assure that the NRC has a thorough understanding of what happened at Nine Mile Point.

The difference between an Augmented Inspection and an Incident Investigation is principally that the AIT is focused on licensee performance whereas the IIT is focused on determining generic implications include adequacy of regulatory requirements and guidance.

Taylor said there are several aspects to the loss of electric power to important systems at the plant which require close examination to assure that the generic technical and operational implications are understood. These include the loss of five uninterruptable power supplies and the loss of emergency lighting in some parts of the plant. The IIT will be headed by Jack Rosenthal, a senior reactor safety expert on the NRC headquarters staff.

The upgrade in the investigation was made because of the potential implications of multiple failures of power supplies on other reactor facilities with similar configurations. The safety significance of the emergency at Nine Mile Point Unit 2 remains unchanged. The Augmented Inspection Team has verified that the reactor did shut down automatically after a transformer failure, there was no threat of damage to the fuel and no release of radioactivity.

The Incident Investigation Team will focus on a detailed review of the electrical systems design, the equipment response to the electrical disruption, and the challenges the electrical system failures placed on operating personnel. Its report will be made public.

Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation has agreed not to restart the plant until approval by the administrator of NRC's Regional Office at King of Prussia, PA.