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NRC STAFF SENDS AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM
TO WOLF CREEK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN KANSAS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff in Arlington, Texas, has sent a five-member Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) to the Wolf Creek nuclear power plant near Burlington, Kansas.

The AIT will look into the circumstances surrounding a partial loss of offsite power on September 23 and the subsequent tripping of two reactor coolant pumps, the loss of a circulating water pump and the loss of service air to the spent fuel pool transfer canal boot seal. As a result of the loss of the seal, six to eight feet of water leaked from the top of the spent fuel pool into the transfer canal rendering the spent fuel cooling system inoperable.

There was no release of radioactivity to the environment and no danger to the public or plant workers during the event and the spent fuel remained covered with water.

The Wolf Creek plant was shut down for refueling when the partial loss of offsite power occurred about 10:35 a.m. local time; however, the fact that water had leaked from the spent fuel pool was not discovered until about 12:15 p.m. The water level and the cooling system since have been restored to service.

The AIT is charged with developing a better understanding of the initiating event, its safety significance and potential generic concerns. Specifically, the team will:

- review pertinent documentation, plant conditions at the time and the sequence of events;

- review and assess plant structures, systems and components that caused, contributed to or were used during the event;

- review operator and management response to the event;

- assess plant conditions which mitigated the event;

- review the procedures, alarms and indications necessary to assess and recover from the event;

- review contingency actions associated with the plant initial conditions or developed prior to placing the facility in an abnormal electrical lineup;

- review shutdown risk and human factors event considerations; and

- review corrective actions planned by the Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation.

The AIT is headed by Thomas Stetka, Chief of the Plant Systems Section in the NRC's Region IV Office in Arlington. He will be assisted by Dale Powers, a Senior Region IV Reactor Inspector. Other members will be Charles Paulk, Senior Review IV Reactor Inspector; Gregory Pick, NRC Resident Inspector at Cooper nuclear power station in Nebraska; and William Reckley, Project Manager from the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation in Rockville, Maryland.

Onsite work will begin on September 25 and is expected to be completed by September 30. A report of the AIT's findings, which will be made public, should be completed by late October.