

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC, ENTERGY TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS
AT RIVER BEND NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference Tuesday, December 2, with officials of Entergy Operations Inc., operator of the River Bend nuclear power plant near St. Francisville, Louisiana, to discuss two apparent violations of NRC requirements.

The conference will begin at 1:00 p.m. at NRC Region IV offices in Arlington, Texas. The meeting will be open to public observation; NRC officials will be available afterward for questions.

The apparent violations occurred on September 13 and October 4, and both involved the loss of shutdown cooling to the reactor fuel. Fuel in the reactor vessel continues to generate heat, called decay heat, after the reactor has been shut down, although at a much reduced level.

On September 13, while the plant was shut down for refueling, operators removed the shutdown cooling system from service while preparing to start the newly installed Alternate Decay Heat Removal system. A delay in starting the system allowed reactor water temperature to increase during a planned system test to more than 200 degrees Fahrenheit in violation of the plant technical specifications.

On October 4, a second instance of shutdown cooling loss occurred due to errors while performing a system lineup. Reactor water temperature increased from 97 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit during this incident.

An NRC special inspection conducted September 22 through October 17 reviewed the procedures, training and human performance which led to the apparent failures to adequately monitor and maintain control of reactor plant temperature. The September 13 incident was found to be especially significant because boiling occurred in the reactor vessel while the primary coolant system, drywell and containment boundaries were not intact.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that NRC has made a final determination that violations did occur or that enforcement action, such as a monetary fine, will be taken. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance, and to provide Entergy officials with an opportunity to point

out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report and present corrective actions that have been taken.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later time.

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