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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM TO REVIEW
CIRCUIT BREAKER FAILURE AT CLINTON NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will conduct a special inspection at the Clinton Nuclear Power Station following the failure of a circuit breaker early Tuesday (August 5) during a change of cooling system pumps. The plant, which is operated by Illinois Power Company, is near Clinton, Illinois.

The utility was preparing to start the Clinton plant up following a shutdown which began September 5, 1996. The circuit breaker failure will delay the startup.

About 4 a.m. on Tuesday the utility was changing from one pump to another in the plant's shutdown cooling system. During the changing of pumps, a circuit breaker should have opened to shut off power to one of the pumps. The 4,160 volt circuit breaker, however, failed to open when it received the 'open' signal from plant operators.

The cause of the circuit breaker failure is not known. A similar circuit breaker failed to open on July 22. The utility attributed that failure to a malfunction of the actuating springs that open the circuit breaker.

The inspection will begin Wednesday. The Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) will include electrical specialists and other inspectors from the NRC's regional office in Lisle, Illinois, and from its headquarters in Rockville, Maryland.

The AIT will present its preliminary findings to the utility in a meeting, open to public observation. The time and place of the meeting will be announced later. The team will subsequently issue a written report which will be available to the public.

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