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NRC STAFF TO CONDUCT SPECIAL TEAM INSPECTION
OF SEPT. 6 SHUTDOWN AT CLINTON POWER STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is conducting a special team inspection at the Clinton Power Station to review the circumstances surrounding a reactor shutdown on September 6 because of a leaking pump in the reactor cooling system.

The plant, which is located near Clinton, Illinois, is operated by Illinois Power Company.

An additional NRC team inspection will begin shortly to review control room activities at the plant.

In the September 6 shutdown, the cooling water leakage was through the seals on a recirculation pump. The leaking water was collected in a drain system in the reactor containment, and there was no release of radioactivity to the environment.

The recirculation pump -- one of two such pumps -- increases the flow of water through the reactor and increases the reactor's thermal efficiency.

The current NRC inspection is focusing on the decisions and actions of reactor operators as they monitored the increasing leakage through the pump seal and attempted to control it. Some of the steps taken by the operators may not have been covered by existing plant procedures.

NRC license requirements provide that the plant be shut down if the leakage exceeds 5 gallons per minute and cannot be reduced within 4 hours. The reactor operators attempted to reduce the leakage by closing various valves. The leakage remained above the limit, and the plant was subsequently shut down.

The four-person special inspection team is expected to complete its onsite review Friday. It will issue a written report in several weeks. The report will be publicly available.

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