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NRC AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM SENT TO
FORT CALHOUN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

James L. Milhoan, Administrator of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Region IV office in Arlington, Texas, has sent an Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) to the Fort Calhoun Station nuclear power plant to assess the circumstances surrounding two incidents of control rod system problems which occurred on November 13 and November 18. The Fort Calhoun facility is located 19 miles north of Omaha, Nebraska.

Mr. Milhoan also has sent a Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL) to Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) confirming the utility's agreement not to resume operations at Fort Calhoun until OPPD staff has discussed its analysis of these control rod system problems with the NRC staff in a public meeting.

The November 13 incident involved the unplanned withdrawal of one of 49 control rods during a scheduled surveillance test. A special NRC inspection was initiated on November 14 in response to this event. The November 18 incident occurred during a surveillance test to troubleshoot problems with the control rod system and involved the unplanned insertion of one control rod into the reactor core and the loss of power to the lights which indicate control rod position.

Both incidents occurred while the plant was shutdown and posed no danger to the public or the environment.

The Augmented Inspection Team, which arrived at the Fort Calhoun site on November 19, is charged with gathering information for the purpose of: (1) obtaining a better understanding of these control rod problems; (2) reviewing the corrective actions being taken to prevent their recurrence; and (3) assessing the potential generic implications of the incidents.

The four-member AIT is headed by Thomas F. Stetka, a Section Chief in the Region IV office. Other members include Ray Mullikin, the NRC's Senior Resident Inspector at the Fort Calhoun site, and Steven Bloom and Subinoy Mazumdar from the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation in Rockville, Maryland.

The AIT will discuss its findings in a public meeting with Omaha Public Power District management when they complete their on-site work and a written report detailing the findings will be made public when it is completed.

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