NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO DISCUSS HARRIS NUCLEAR PLANT CONCERNS WITH CP&L

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a regulatory conference with CP&L (a Progress Energy company) at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 17, in Atlanta to discuss the company's position on the significance of a bearing failure on a charging/safety injection pump at the Harris nuclear power plant southwest of Raleigh. Those pumps are designed to inject water into the reactor coolant system under certain accident conditions.

Normally two of those pumps are available, but the pump with the bearing problem was used at times to temporarily replace one of the two normally available pumps. If that pump had failed, only one pump would have been available to perform the safety function.

The NRC staff, through its significance determination process, has made a preliminary determination that the finding is White -- an issue with some increased importance to safety, which may require additional NRC inspection. Under the significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being in one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of significance, beginning with green and progressing in severity to white, yellow or red.

Two apparent violations -- the plant staff's failure to comply with Technical Specifications and the failure to initially classify the issue correctly within the licensee's corrective action program -- have also been identified, and are being considered for enforcement action.

The meeting will be held in the NRC's Region II offices on the 24th floor of the Sam Nunn Atlanta Federal Center, located at 61 Forsyth Street, S.W. It is between the NRC staff and CP&L management but is open to observation by the public.

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

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