



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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CONTACT: Ken Clark (404)562-4416/e-mail: kmc2@nrc.gov
Roger D. Hannah (404)562-4417/e-mail: rdh1@nrc.gov

NRC DETERMINES FARLEY NUCLEAR PLANT SECURITY ISSUE TO BE OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has completed its significance determination of an inspection finding at Southern Nuclear Operating Company's Farley nuclear plant near Columbia, Alabama, related to the failure of the company's protective strategies during simulated security events, and concluded that the finding was White (low to moderate safety significance).

In July 2000, the NRC conducted an exercise at the Farley plant to evaluate the ability of the plant's security equipment and personnel to prevent mock adversaries from gaining access to certain areas within the plant. Weaknesses identified during that exercise led the NRC staff to characterize the finding as Yellow on a preliminary basis. A Yellow inspection finding is an issue with substantial importance to safety, and if it had remained at the Farley plant would have resulted in a more detailed review by the NRC staff of the company's corrective action and self-assessment programs.

Southern Nuclear requested a regulatory conference with the NRC staff, which was held in late July of this year, to discuss the company's views on the issue. The conference was closed to the public due to the sensitive nature of the security information being discussed. Based on an evaluation of additional information provided at the conference by Southern Nuclear (specifically that tactics used during one of the exercises are not included in the current model for conducting such exercises), the NRC staff concluded the issue was White. As a result, the NRC staff plans to conduct additional inspection activities relating to security at the Farley plant. Another security exercise will also be conducted at the Farley plant this fall.

The safety significance of each NRC inspection finding is characterized by a color -- green, white, yellow, or red. The agency response to the inspection findings is based on the significance of the items. A green finding receives normal NRC oversight, while white, yellow, or red assessments result in increasing NRC involvement, including additional inspections.

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