



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO CONDUCT SUPPLEMENTAL INSPECTION AT COOPER NUCLEAR STATION

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will conduct a three-week, supplemental inspection of the Cooper Nuclear Station, a nuclear power plant near Brownville, Nebraska, beginning June 24. The plant is operated by Nebraska Public Power District.

A supplemental inspection is one that is added to the NRC's normal, or baseline, inspection program in response to declining regulatory performance. The supplemental inspection at the Cooper plant will be the most extensive called for under NRC's inspection program. The purpose of the inspection is to provide information that the NRC will use to determine the full extent of regulatory problems at the plant and whether additional agency actions are necessary.

Declining regulatory performance at Cooper has taken place since October 2000, when the NRC identified the first of five inspection findings with low to moderate safety significance. Four of the findings were associated with failures in Cooper's implementation of their emergency preparedness program, while the fifth finding involved a compromise of the biennial requalification exam for plant operators. Notwithstanding these issues, Cooper continues to operate in a manner that adequately maintains public health and safety.

The inspection will be performed by a 13-member team which will spend a week at the plant beginning June 24 and another two weeks beginning July 15. Kriss Kennedy, chief of the branch that oversees Cooper in NRC Region IV, will lead the inspection team. A public meeting, to be announced separately, will be held the week of August 19 to discuss results, and the final inspection report is expected to be issued at the end of August.

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