



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO MEET WITH AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER CO. TO DISCUSS SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE OF EQUIPMENT COOLING ISSUE AT D.C. COOK PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet July 25 in Lisle, Illinois, with representatives of American Electric Power Company to discuss the safety significance and vulnerabilities revealed as a result of the partial clogging of equipment cooling systems at the D. C. Cook Nuclear Power Station during August of last year. The two-reactor facility is located near Bridgman, Michigan.

The NRC staff has completed a preliminary assessment of the problem and concluded that it is of "substantial safety significance." The meeting, called a Regulatory Conference, will seek the utility's evaluation of its significance. The NRC's preliminary assessment was issued in its Inspection Report 01-17, dated June 10.

The meeting will be held at 9 a.m. (CDT) in the NRC's Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle. Visitors should report first to the Second Floor reception area. The meeting is open to public observation; before the meeting is adjourned, members of the public may ask questions and provide comments.

The meeting will also be available for viewing by video conference in Room O-3B4 of the NRC's Headquarters Office, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland.

The vulnerability was discovered on August 29 of last year when lake sediment and debris was drawn into the water system which provides cooling for the emergency diesel generators and other plant safety equipment. The Unit 1 reactor was shut down for maintenance, and the Unit 2 reactor was in operation.

A strainer on the water system intake was improperly installed, which allowed the debris to enter the system and reduce the water flow to various heat exchangers in both units. The principal equipment, potentially affected by the debris, were the plant's four emergency diesel generators, which were not operating nor needed at the time.

When plant operators discovered the reduced flow in the equipment cooling system, they shut Unit 2 down to investigate and make repairs.

NRC inspection findings are evaluated using a four-level scale of safety significance, ranging from "green" for a finding of minor significance, through "white" and "yellow" to "red," for a finding of high safety significance.

The NRC's preliminary evaluation determined the D. C. Cook problem to be a "yellow" finding -- one of "substantial safety significance" because it would affect the ability of the emergency diesel generators to function if needed to supply power to plant safety systems in the event of an electrical power loss.

Information presented by the utility in the Regulatory Conference will be used by the NRC staff, along with its inspection findings, to determine the final safety significance of the problem. The final determination of the safety significance will be posted on the NRC's web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/COOK1/cook1_chart.html

"Yellow" inspection findings may lead to additional NRC inspections and further meetings with the utility to review plant performance.

The details of the NRC inspection findings are discussed in Inspection Report 01-17 which is available online in the NRC's electronic reading room. This report may be viewed in the NRC's ADAMS document system, accessible at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC Public Document Room at 301/415-4737 or 1/800/397-4209.

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