



NRC NEWS

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NRC CITES BRAIDWOOD NUCLEAR POWER STATION FOR VIOLATION OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has determined that a violation of NRC safety regulations at the Braidwood Nuclear Power Station near Braidwood, Illinois, should be characterized as "white," meaning that it is an issue of low to moderate importance to safety. The plant, which has two reactors, is operated by Exelon Generation Company.

An NRC inspection in February found that the utility had not taken adequate corrective action for valve problems affecting the functioning of a plant safety system which would control reactor pressure under certain accident conditions.

The valves, which are designed to maintain sufficient air pressure to operate the safety system, had excessive leakage when tested in September of last year. Similar problems had been found during testing on seven occasions since 1991.

Under its safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with green and progressing to white, yellow or red.

A preliminary "white" determination for the valve leakage problem was described in an letter to Exelon on June 25, which provided the company with an opportunity to request a regulatory conference to discuss this issue. Exelon subsequently informed the NRC that it did not contest the "white" characterization of the safety significance of this finding and did not request a meeting with the NRC staff.

In addition to the white determination, the NRC issued a Notice of Violation to Exelon for failing to take effective action to correct the valve problems and prevent a recurrence.

The "white" finding may result in future NRC inspections focusing on the plant's corrective action program and its response to the valve failures. In addition, because of another "white" issue involving the failure of an auxiliary feedwater pump to start in February, the NRC staff may schedule additional inspections or meetings with the utility to review plant performance more broadly.

Additional details on the "white" finding are available in Inspection Report 2002-03, issued March 15, which is available from the Region III Office of Public Affairs or on the NRC's web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BRAI1/brai1_chart.html