



NRC NEWS

**U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS -- REGION I**

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NRC ISSUES FINDING OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE TO CALVERT CLIFFS NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a "white" finding to the company that operates the Calvert Cliffs nuclear power plant for an issue involving a shipment of radioactive materials from the facility. The NRC considers the issue to be of low to moderate importance to safety but one which may require additional NRC inspections.

Calvert Cliffs, a twin-reactor plant located in Lusby, Md., is operated by Constellation Generation Group.

The finding was identified during an NRC inspection completed on June 2. It involved a shipment of radioactive waste in a container from the plant to a waste-processing facility in Oak Ridge, Tenn. Specifically, on May 23, Calvert Cliffs failed to prepare the shipment in a manner sufficient to ensure that radiation levels on the container's exterior surface would not exceed U.S. Department of Transportation regulatory limits. Those limits are 200 millirems per hour at any point on a container's external surface, under normal transportation conditions.

In this case, upon arrival at the processing facility on May 24, a radiation level as high as 300 millirems per hour was measured at a point on the container's external surface. (To put that into perspective, the average American receives about 360 millirems of radiation from manmade and natural sources each year.) While this constitutes a violation of NRC regulatory requirements, the finding is of low to moderate importance to safety because the condition existed for less than a day; the measured radiation level did not substantially exceed the regulatory limit; and the point of the elevated radiation level on the container was essentially inaccessible to members of the public.

Using the agency's 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."

In the case of this finding, the company did not contest the characterization of the risk significance and declined an opportunity for a regulatory conference to discuss the issue or to respond in writing.

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