



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO DISCUSS POINT BEACH INSPECTION PLANS JUNE 24

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with Nuclear Management Company officials on June 24 in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, to discuss plans for a special NRC inspection to review performance at the Point Beach Nuclear Plant. The two-reactor facility is near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

The meeting will be at 7 p.m. at the Holiday Inn, 4601 Calumet Avenue, Manitowoc. The meeting is open to public observation; before the meeting is adjourned, members of the public may ask questions and provide comments.

In addition to discussing the NRC's inspection plans, the meeting will include a review by Nuclear Management Company of its preparations for the inspection, the results of its internal assessment of plant performance, and its initiatives for improving plant performance.

This special inspection results from the NRC's determination that the possible failure of an auxiliary cooling water system was of "high safety significance." Normal plant operations were not affected by the problem, which was initially discovered by plant personnel in 2001.

The auxiliary cooling water system is used to safely shut down the reactor if problems occur during plant operations and to continue removing heat from the reactor after shutdown.

Even though the utility took prompt action to address the problem, the inspection is intended to look at principal aspects of plant operations to see if there are other performance problems. The NRC Reactor Oversight Process calls for such an inspection when there are problems of "high safety significance."

The NRC is continuing to evaluate a second problem with the auxiliary cooling water system which was found by the utility last year. The agency's preliminary evaluation is that this, too, is a problem of "high safety significance." The NRC staff met earlier this month with Nuclear Management Company officials to discuss the safety significance of the second problem. The utility will be providing additional information to the NRC before the agency makes its final determination of the safety significance.

NRC inspection findings are evaluated using a four-level scale of safety significance, ranging from "green" for a finding of very low significance, through "white" and "yellow" to "red," for a finding of high safety significance. The 2001 auxiliary cooling water system problem was determined

to be a “red” finding; the preliminary safety significance of the 2002 problem is also “red,” but the final determination remains under review.

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