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NEWS

NRC

NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov>

No. III-03-064

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October 2, 2003

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NRC TO CONDUCT SPECIAL INSPECTION OF FUEL HANDLING INCIDENT AT BYRON

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection of the circumstances surrounding a fuel handling incident which occurred September 26 during refueling activities at Unit 1 of the Byron Nuclear Power Station. The two-reactor facility near Byron, Illinois, is operated by Exelon Generation Company.

During refueling, a fuel assembly was being moved from the reactor to the spent fuel storage pool when it struck equipment in the fuel transfer area.

There was no evidence of damage to the fuel assembly, which was contained inside a fuel handling tool, and there was no release of radioactivity associated with the incident. In the refueling process, fuel assemblies are lifted from the reactor using an overhead crane and moved underwater to the spent fuel storage pool.

Because of an obstruction in the fuel transfer area, the refueling staff had disabled a safety system in the overhead crane which limits the path for fuel movements to avoid possible contact with objects that might damage the fuel.

The NRC's special inspection is being conducted to determine the circumstances which led to the disabling of the overhead crane safety system and other aspects of the incident.

The report of the inspection will be publically available from the NRC Region III Office of Public Affairs when it is issued, about 30 days after the inspection is completed. It will also be posted on the NRC's web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>. Use Docket Number 05000454. Assistance in using the web reading room is available by calling the NRC Public Document Room at 800-397-4209.

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