



NRC NEWS

U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Region IV
611 Ryan Plaza Drive - Suite 400
Arlington, TX 76011-4005

No. IV-04-035
Contact: Victor Dricks
Phone: 817-860-8128

August 20, 2004
E-Mail: opa4@nrc.gov

NRC TO CONDUCT INSPECTIONS AT PALO VERDE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will begin a special inspection to evaluate problems related to a system that may be used to supply water for emergency cooling in the unlikely event of an accident at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station. The plant, located near Wintersburg, Ariz., is operated by Arizona Public Service Co.

On July 29, operators at Palo Verde discovered air trapped in a section of piping that could interfere with the performance of pumps needed to supply water for emergency core cooling and containment spray during some accident conditions.

“Although the licensee took actions which address the immediate safety concern it is important for the NRC to independently assess that these actions are acceptable for the long-term and that there are no potential generic issues for other nuclear plants,” said NRC Region IV Administrator Bruce S. Mallett.

The NRC staff has decided to conduct a special inspection to evaluate the adequacy of the licensee’s response to the situation, including its extent, its root cause and corrective actions.

The NRC’s Special Inspection Team, consisting of the resident inspector from the Grand Gulf nuclear plant and the senior resident inspector at Waterford 3, as well as a headquarters specialist, will begin its review Monday.

The team will issue an inspection report about 30 days after their inspection is completed. The report will be available on the agency’s web site and through its Electronic Reading Room at: <http://www.nrc.gov> as an Agencywide Document Access and Management System (ADAMS) document. Help in using ADAMS is available through the NRC Public Document Room at 301-415-4737, or 1-800-397-4209.

Concurrently, the NRC also is conducting a follow-up to its augmented inspection of the shutdown of all three reactors at the site on June 14, following an electrical grid disturbance.

An NRC Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) determined that the licensee's response to the event was generally acceptable, although complicated by a number of equipment failures, procedure issues, and human performance issues. A number of issues were identified as requiring corrective actions and assessment, which an AIT follow-up team will review. A report on the first team's findings is available through ADAMS.

The AIT follow-up team will report to the site no later than Sept 7. and issue a report within 45 days of the completion of work. It will be made available through ADAMS.

###