



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. III-06-002

January 10, 2006

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT QUAD CITIES NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission Monday began a special inspection into the root causes of the damage to steam line relief valves at the Quad Cities Nuclear Plant located near Cordova, Ill. The two-unit reactor is operated by Exelon Generation Co.

In Dec. 2005 an electrical problem occurred with one of the four Unit-2 electromatic relief valves. These valves release steam and depressurize the reactor in case of an accident.

The company examined the valve and found that the valve actuator was damaged and the valve was inoperable. The company subsequently shut down Unit-2 to examine the other three valves. The valves showed similar degradation but remained operable. The company replaced the actuators on all four valves.

Exelon also shut down Unit-1 on Jan. 6 to examine the condition of this unit's four relief valves. All the valves showed signs of wear and degradation; one of the four valves was found to be inoperable. Two of the remaining three are still being evaluated. The company replaced the actuators on all four valves on this unit as well.

The company's preliminary analysis indicates that the valve actuator damage may be attributed to higher vibrations caused by extended power uprate which started in 2002. Both units are currently operating at 85 percent power, the level of power before the uprate. The units will continue to operate at the lower level until the root cause of the valve actuator damage is identified.

The NRC resident inspectors monitored site activities starting Jan. 6. The four-person inspection team will follow the company's root cause investigation, analysis and corrective actions.

An inspection report will be issued about 45 days following the completion of the NRC inspection. The report will be publically available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System, or ADAMS, at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Use Docket Number 05000254 or 05000265 to locate the report. Help in using ADAMS is available from the NRC Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209.

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