



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES A “YELLOW” FINDING TO FARLEY NUCLEAR PLANT FOR VALVE TEST FAILURES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has determined that an inspection finding at the Farley nuclear power plant related to valves associated with the Unit 2 residual heat removal system containment suction supply is "yellow," meaning the issue has substantial safety significance and will result in additional NRC inspections and potentially other NRC actions. The Farley plant, operated by Southern Nuclear Operating Company, is located in southern Ala. near Dothan.

The NRC staff completed a special inspection in May that reviewed the circumstances surrounding Unit 2 residual heat removal containment sump suction valve failures which occurred during surveillance testing in April 2006 and January 2007. During that inspection, the NRC found the company failed to promptly identify and correct the condition.

After the NRC staff issued a preliminary “yellow” finding, a conference with Southern Nuclear was held September 12. During that meeting, the company described its assessment of the significance of the finding, its root cause evaluation and corrective actions. After considering the information from the inspection, the conference, and additional information supplied after the conference, the NRC staff has concluded that the inspection finding is appropriately characterized as “yellow.” The NRC is also citing the company for a violation.

Under the NRC reactor oversight process, inspection findings are evaluated using a significance determination process and assigned a color indicating its safety significance. Findings with very low safety significance are labeled "green." "White" findings have low to moderate safety significance, "yellow" findings have substantial safety significance, and "red" findings have high safety significance.

The “yellow” finding moves Farley Unit 2 into the “degraded cornerstone” column of the NRC action matrix, resulting in a higher level of NRC scrutiny. This is the third highest level of NRC oversight and Farley Unit 2 joins 10 other U.S. nuclear units in that column. Farley Unit 1 remains in the first, or licensee response column, of the matrix. The position of all nuclear units within the NRC Action Matrix is available on the NRC web site at:

www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/actionmatrix_summary.html

“I want to reassure residents near Farley that the plant continues to operate safely,” said NRC Regional Administrator William Travers. “However, the failure to promptly address these valve failures warrants increased oversight by the NRC.”

The NRC staff will determine the most appropriate response and notify Southern Nuclear later of any additional inspections, meetings or other activities the agency may plan.

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