



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC CONDUCTING SPECIAL INSPECTION AT WOLF CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is conducting a special inspection at the Wolf Creek nuclear plant in response to problems discovered in a safety system that provides cooling water for the reactor during an emergency. The plant, located near Burlington, Kan., is operated by the Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corp.

On Jan. 10, operators discovered pockets of gas in a pipe that should be filled with water. The pipe is part of the emergency core cooling system which provides water to the reactor during an emergency. Workers shut the plant down on Jan. 11 to address the problem.

The problem is believed to have been caused by several leaky valves and a pocket of gas that remained in a pipe since the last refueling outage in the fall of 2006. The licensee has vented the gas from the piping and is in the process of restarting the reactor.

“We want to take a look at the way the licensee has responded to the problem,” said Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. “It’s possible that the gas pockets may have prevented the emergency core cooling system from being able to perform its safety function had it been needed.”

A two-person team of NRC specialists will review the circumstances related to the problem, the licensee’s root cause evaluation and the effect it had on the operability of the safety system. The team consists of a senior project engineer from the NRC’s Region IV office in Arlington, Texas, and a resident inspector from the Waterford nuclear plant in Louisiana.

The inspection will begin today and is expected to take several days. The team will write a report about 30 – 45 days after completion of the inspection. The report will be available on the agency’s online document library at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>.

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