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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT BRUNSWICK NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has dispatched a Special Inspection Team to the Brunswick nuclear power plant, operated by Progress Energy near Southport on the southeastern coast of North Carolina. The team will inspect and assess circumstances associated with a Jan. 1 malfunction of a component on one of the plant's four emergency diesel generators and the discovery of a similar condition on another.

During testing on Jan. 1, a component on Emergency Diesel Generator #3 designed to limit the amount of fuel available during startup did not return to its original position. That problem may have prevented the diesel generator from working as designed had it been needed.

While testing the other three diesel generators, plant employees identified a similar condition on the #4 diesel and declared it inoperable. Plant workers made adjustments to the limiter on the #4 diesel and replaced the component on the #3 diesel. Both diesel generators were tested and declared operable on Jan. 2.

The NRC's three-person Special Inspection Team, which includes two region-based inspectors and a resident inspector stationed at the site, is developing a sequence of events related to the issue; reviewing the company's actions following discovery; evaluating the adequacy of the company's past post-maintenance testing; and identifying any generic issues for Brunswick or other nuclear plants.

The special inspection began Tuesday, Jan. 20, and is expected to continue until early February. The NRC will issue a report within 45 days of the completion of the inspection.

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