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Pierpoint, Christine

From: Eric Epstein [lechambon@comcast.net]
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Cc: Welkie, Andrew; Eitreim, Anthony; Baratta, Anthony; CSisco@winston.com; Pierpoint, Christine; OGCMailCenter Resource; drepka@winston.com; Frye, Don; Hawkens, Roy; Julian, Emile; Julian, Emile; EJduncan@winston.com; Ngbea, Evangeline; genestip@comcast.net; Bielecki, Jessica; Deucher, Joseph; Gilman, Joseph; Golshan, KG; Lewis, Linda; maria.webb@pillsburylaw.com; Zabler, Marian; Kennedy, Michael; Greathead, Nancy; OCAAMAIL Resource; rwilson@winston.com; Charbeneau, Randall; Giitter, Rebecca; robert.haemer@pillsburylaw.com; Weisman, Robert; MSHD Resource; Kirkwood, Sara; Vrahoretis, Susan; owad@schnitz.com; Ryan, Tom; trsmith@winston.com; Froehlich, William; Kahn, Zachary
Subject: Nuclear plant unit could be down for extended time

Nuclear plant unit could be down for extended time
 BY PATRICK SWEET (STAFF WRITER)
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Flooding forced PPL to shut down Unit 1 of the Susquehanna Nuclear Power Plant late Friday afternoon.

An estimated 1 million gallons of Susquehanna river water flowed from an 8-foot-diameter pipe heading to the condenser room - where steam leaving the turbine is cooled - and damaged equipment in the basement of the plant's turbine building.

As a result, the plant could be shut down for a long period.

"We don't have an estimate," PPL spokesman Joe Scopelliti said. "There is no timeline."

Patrick Finney, the plant's senior Nuclear Regulatory Commission inspector, doesn't think the plant will be online any time soon, though.

"I think they have a long road ahead of them," Mr. Finney said Tuesday.

The utility is investigating whether a door allowing workers access to the condenser room is the source, Mr. Scopelliti said.

Mr. Finney said it also is investigating whether a gasket was out of place.

When the plant workers discovered the leak, they were forced to cut off water to the pipe manually because computerized systems failed, Mr. Finney said. Having to turn the water off manually, though, doesn't represent a safety issue. The plant, he said, was designed to have the manual option.

The plant was forced to bring in extra workers to dry, repair and test equipment and is sampling the water for radiological and industrial material as it is removed and stored in tanks.

"If it meets all the discharge limits," Mr. Scopelliti said of the water, "it'll be returned back to the river."

Given the location of the leak, Mr. Finney said, any contaminants in the water will likely be industrial, such as grease and oil from moving mechanical parts.

Before the plant is started up, PPL will inspect the leak and area affected by the water.

To make up for the loss of generation, PPL will either purchase additional power from the grid or produce it itself at another plant. Susquehanna Unit 2 is still fully functioning.

Contact the writer: psweet@citizensvoice.com

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In-Reply-To: <24497328.15.1262889158109.JavaMail.SYSTEM@hq2k3eie06>

Date: Thu, 22 Jul 2010 06:41:08 -0400

CC: axw5@nrc.gov,

Anthony.Eitreim@nrc.gov,

ajb5@nrc.gov,

CSisco@winston.com,

cmp@nrc.gov,

ogcmailcenter@nrc.gov,

dreпка@winston.com,

dx8@nrc.gov,

erh@nrc.gov,

elj@nrc.gov,

emile.julian@nrc.gov,

EJduncan@winston.com,

evangelina.ngbea@nrc.gov,

genestilp@comcast.net,

jab2@nrc.gov,

jhd@nrc.gov,

jsg1@nrc.gov,

kg.golshan@nrc.gov,

linda.lewis@nrc.gov,
maria.webb@pillsburylaw.com,
mlz@nrc.gov,
mfk2@nrc.gov,
nancy.greathead@nrc.gov,
OCAAMAIL@nrc.gov,
rwilson@winston.com,
Randall.Charbeneau@nrc.gov,
rll@nrc.gov,
robert.haemer@pillsburylaw.com,
rmw@nrc.gov,
mshd.resource@nrc.gov,
sara.kirkwood@nrc.gov,
susan.vraoretis@nrc.gov,
owad@schnitz.com,
tom.ryan@nrc.gov,
trsmith@winston.com,
wjf1@nrc.gov,
zxk1@nrc.gov

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