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NRC Increases Oversight of Monticello for Flooding Protection Violation

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is increasing its oversight of the Monticello nuclear plant for failure to maintain an appropriate plan to protect against a potential flooding event.

Monticello is operated by Northern States Power Co., and is located in Monticello, Minn., approximately 30 miles northwest of Minneapolis.

“Even though there was no actual flooding event, this issue is of concern because flood protection procedures are extremely important. They require certain safety features be available and built within a specific timeframe to protect equipment from potential flood waters,” said NRC Region III Administrator Cynthia D. Pederson. “We know the plant has made corrections to address this violation and we will review those changes to make sure the issues have been fully addressed.”

As a result of flooding walkdowns directed by the NRC in response to the accident at Fukushima, an NRC inspector identified a violation involving the failure of the plant to demonstrate flood protection features within the required timeframe.

After the NRC reviewed details of the plant’s flood protection strategy, the NRC staff concluded that Monticello did not have appropriate procedures in place and would not have been able to construct a protective wall and levee system within the required timeframe. The NRC staff has classified the violation as yellow, meaning it has substantial safety significance.

The company has taken corrective actions to address the violation by updating plant procedures and by pre-staging the necessary material on-site, so that the protective wall and levee system could now be installed within the required timeframe stated in the plant’s licensing basis.

The NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection to provide assurance that the root cause and contributing causes are identified and understood, and to ensure the corrective actions are sufficient to prevent recurrence. The inspection will also provide an independent determination of whether safety culture issues contributed to this violation.