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NRC Says Fort Calhoun Plant is Ready to Restart

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has determined the Fort Calhoun nuclear plant is ready to restart after being shut down for nearly three years to address a number of significant performance deficiencies. The plant, operated by Omaha Public Power District (OPPD), is located 19 miles north of Omaha, Neb.

The NRC restart readiness assessment is based on the NRC having thoroughly reviewed all of the extensive actions OPPD committed to take prior to restarting the plant. Fort Calhoun Station has been shut down since April 2011 for a refueling outage that was extended due to record Missouri river flooding. The plant remained shut down to correct a variety of concerns with plant equipment, programs and processes.

Today, Marc Dapas, NRC Region IV Administrator in Arlington, Texas, outlined the agency's decision in a [letter to the utility](#). The letter also closed an existing Confirmatory Action Letter (CAL), previously issued by the NRC, to confirm OPPD's commitment not to restart the plant until the NRC had completed its review of OPPD's actions to address the significant performance deficiencies that led to the extended shutdown.

"The NRC has concluded that the plant, people, and processes are ready to support the safe restart of the Fort Calhoun Station," Dapas told the utility. He said the NRC reached that conclusion on the basis of more than 23,000 hours of extensive NRC inspections and detailed evaluations to independently review more than 450 restart actions items, major improvements made by OPPD to the plant's supporting organizational infrastructure and programs, as well as a number of equipment modifications to improve reliability.

When the plant starts up, NRC will have inspectors providing round the clock coverage observing restart activities. In addition to two resident inspectors, three inspectors will be on site.

With the decision, the NRC also issued a post-restart CAL to confirm specific actions OPPD has agreed to take to ensure long-term performance improvement.

In October, OPPD heated up the plant to normal operating temperature and pressure to inspect for any leaks. NRC inspectors observed these activities and determined that the plant and personnel performed satisfactorily with no significant issues.

On Dec. 2, OPPD provided NRC with its restart [readiness letter](#) entitled, “Integrated Report to Support Restart of Fort Calhoun Station and Post-Restart Commitments for Sustained Improvement.” The letter outlined the actions OPPD took to address the restart checklist items and provided commitments to implement post-restart actions that will continue to further improve plant performance.

An NRC public meeting was held on Nov. 21, in Omaha where staff reported that more than 90 percent of the work was complete or nearing completion. Since then, the remaining restart checklist categories have been closed.

The plant will remain under increased NRC oversight until the agency determines that the plant’s performance warrants returning it to the normal reactor oversight program.

In addition, the NRC will continue to hold periodic public meetings with OPPD in the local community to provide a status of the licensee’s performance improvements.