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NRC Increases Oversight of Duane Arnold Nuclear Power Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff issued a white finding of low-to-moderate safety significance to the Duane Arnold nuclear power plant for failing to perform an immediate operability evaluation of the Reactor Core Isolation Cooling (RCIC) system. The finding will result in increased oversight by the NRC.

The plant, operated by NextEra Energy Duane Arnold, is located eight miles northwest of Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

NRC inspectors determined the licensee failed to perform an immediate operability evaluation and did not recognize the RCIC system was inoperable after receiving a signal that the turbine speed indicator was in a degraded condition. As a result, this system, which is one of the sources of water for cooling the reactor in case of certain plant events, would not have been available to fulfill its safety function. However, in case of an actual event, other systems are in place to provide cooling water to the reactor.

The utility has taken corrective actions to resolve the problem.

“Even though the issue did not have an impact on public safety, the additional oversight by the NRC is warranted because we expect plants to properly assess the availability and reliability of safety equipment to ensure the plant’s ability to respond to an event,” said Region III Administrator Cynthia D. Pederson. “We will conduct additional inspections to make sure that the causes of the issue are understood and the plant’s corrective actions are sufficient to prevent recurrence.”

As a result of this finding and a previous [white finding](#) issued on Dec. 18, 2013, the plant will move from Column 2 to Column 3 of the NRC’s Action Matrix, retroactive to the third quarter of 2013. The initial white finding involved the failure to have an appropriate procedure for the reassembly of a standby diesel generator’s oil heat exchanger. As a result, one of the station’s two diesel generators was inoperable.

The NRC will conduct an inspection focusing on both white findings to determine whether the plant staff has understood what caused the individual problems and determine if there are common performance issues for the findings; assess if there are safety culture issues that contributed to performance deficiencies; and independently verify the licensee has taken sufficient actions to correct the problems.

The company has 30 days to contest the finding. The NRC inspection letter detailing the final determination will be publically available via [ADAMS](#).