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NRC Begins Special Inspection at Duane Arnold Nuclear Plant

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has started a Special Inspection to review the circumstances surrounding the loss and peeling of coating in areas of the plant's torus. The torus is a ring-shaped structure that wraps around the base of the reactor and is part of containment. Its purpose is to help cool and condense steam in accident scenarios. The coating is similar to paint that is used to preserve metal. The issue was discovered by plant workers after the single-unit plant shut down for a planned refueling outage.

The five-member inspection team began work on site on Tuesday. The team's areas of interest include, better understanding the loss of coating issue, reviewing the procedures used during the installation of the coating, and assessing the plant's repair activities and corrective actions.

"We have sent specialists in chemical coating and mechanical engineering to the site in order help establish a sequence of events and any potential impact on plant safety. We want to ensure the plant continues to operate in a manner that preserves safety," said NRC Region III Administrator Cynthia D. Pederson.

NRC inspectors will work both on- and off-site evaluating the licensee's root cause analysis and observing repairs and testing when possible.

An inspection report documenting the team's findings will be made publicly available within 45 days of the end of the inspection.

The plant is operated by NextEra Energy Duane Arnold LLC, and is located in Palo, Iowa, about 8 miles northwest of Cedar Rapids.