

No: I-15-003

February 2, 2015

CONTACT: Diane Screnci, 610-337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610-337-5331

NRC Initiates Special Inspection at Pilgrim Nuclear Power Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a Special Inspection at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant to review issues surrounding a storm-induced unplanned shutdown on Jan. 27. The single-unit boiling-water reactor is located in Plymouth, Mass., and is owned and operated by Entergy Nuclear.

The six-member team, which will arrive on-site today, will be tasked with reviewing equipment issues that occurred during the shutdown, including the partial loss of off-site power; the failure of a condensate pump motor associated with the plant's High-Pressure Coolant Injection (HPCI) system; and the malfunctioning of one of the plant's four safety relief valves.

Pilgrim, like other nuclear power plants, transmits power to the grid but also receives power back for operational purposes. During the recent major winter storm, one of two 345-kilovolt lines that provide off-site power to the plant tripped. In response, plant operators began reducing power. At about 50-percent power, the second 345-kilovolt line also tripped, resulting in a reactor shutdown, or scram, at about 4 a.m. A third off-site power line, a 23-kilovolt line, remained available.

Operators started the plant's two emergency diesel generators and transferred electrical loads for safety systems to those on-site power supplies due to concerns with off-site power. The transfer was performed by the operators prior to the loss of the off-site power lines.

"The Pilgrim reactor was safely shut down following the loss of two off-site power lines," NRC Region I Administrator Dan Dorman said. "Nevertheless, we want to examine more closely the challenges that surfaced during the event, including safety system and equipment problems and the loss of the two off-site power lines."

An inspection report documenting the team's findings will be issued within 45 days after the completion of the review.