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NRC Begins Special Inspection at Indian Point 3 Nuclear Power Plant to Review Issue Associated with Transformer Event on May 9

A team of NRC inspectors will seek to better understand the presence of water in an electrical supply room at the Indian Point 3 nuclear power plant following a main transformer failure event at the site on May 9th.

Starting today (Tuesday, May 19), a three-member NRC Special Inspection Team will report to the Buchanan (Westchester County), N.Y., facility to review the issue. The room in question contains electrical equipment that provides power to plant safety systems.

“None of the electrical equipment became wet or experienced any damage or failures as a result of the water,” NRC Region I Administrator Dan Dorman. “Nevertheless, the NRC inspectors will be tasked with gathering information on how the water accumulated in the room and the potential for impacts had there been a significantly larger volume of water.”

At 5:50 p.m. on May 9th, with the plant operating at 100-percent power, one of its two main transformers experienced a failure, the cause of which is not yet known. The failure resulted in an automatic shutdown of the reactor that occurred without any complications. Plant operators declared an “Unusual Event” -- the lowest of four levels of emergency classification used by the NRC -- at 6:01 p.m. because of the fire that erupted following the transformer failure.

The Unusual Event was terminated at 9:03 p.m. after the fire was fully extinguished.

A fire suppression system for the transformer automatically doused the fire. In addition, the plant’s on-site fire brigade and off-site firefighters sprayed water and foam onto the transformer to help put out the fire. Among other things, the NRC inspectors will be reviewing whether those sources account for the water observed in the electrical equipment room.

A report summarizing the findings of the Special Inspection Team will be issued within 45 days after the conclusion of the inspection.

Indian Point 3 remains offline while work to replace the transformer continues.