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NRC Increases Oversight of Clinton Power Station

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff issued a white finding of low-to-moderate safety significance to the Clinton nuclear station for the failure to make sure that a safety-related pump would continue to perform its safety function following modifications. The finding will result in increased oversight by the NRC.

On Sept. 16, 2014, a shutdown cooling water pump failed to start during a required operability test. A subsequent review showed that the pump stopped functioning at the conclusion of a similar test performed on May 30, 2014. The failure went undetected and the pump was inoperable for 108 days, which is a violation of NRC requirements. This pump provides water to cool safety-related equipment under certain conditions, such as a loss of offsite power. Another pump remained operable and would have been available to fulfil this safety function if needed.

NRC inspectors determined that the pump failed because, while performing modifications in 1995, the plant did not conduct sufficiently thorough design analysis required by the NRC to ensure the pump's long-term operability. Required tests regularly performed since 1995 demonstrated that the pump remained operable until its failure in 2014.

“The cooling water pump failure did not have a direct impact on plant or public safety. However, when licensees make modifications to safety equipment, we require them to perform a thorough analysis to ensure that safety systems stand ready in case of an event,” said NRC Region III Administrator Cynthia D. Pederson. “Clinton failed to perform this required level of analysis and will have to demonstrate to us that they have corrected this deficiency.”

The company installed a new a pump of a similar design in September 2014 and committed to additional monitoring to ensure it will remain operable until a new pump with an updated design can be installed in 2016.

The NRC will conduct an inspection to independently verify that the plant understands the cause of the problem and has taken sufficient action to make sure it does not recur.

As a result of this finding, the plant will move from Column 1 to Column 2 of the NRC's Action Matrix, as of the first quarter of 2015.

The company has 30 days to contest the finding.

The NRC inspection report is publicly available on the NRC website by using accession number ML15134A224, and the notice of violations is available under accession number ML15223B382.

The plant, operated by Exelon Generation LLC, is located in Clinton, Ill., approximately 23 miles southeast of Bloomington.