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NRC DISPATCHES INSPECTION TEAM TO LASALLE NUCLEAR PLANT AFTER
SHUTDOWNS FOR POTENTIALLY DEGRADED EQUIPMENT COOLING SYSTEMS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is sending an Augmented Inspection Team to the LaSalle Nuclear Power Station after both reactors at the plant were shut down because of debris in the intake structure which supplies cooling water for plant components.

The two-reactor LaSalle facility, which is operated by Commonwealth Edison Company, is near Seneca, Illinois. Unit 1 was shut down late June 28, and Unit 2 was shut down on June 29.

The debris in the intake structure resulted from repair of cracks in the concrete of the service water intake building using a polymer foam material. The repairs occurred in May and June. The foam material was subsequently found in the water in the intake building.

The intake building draws water from the LaSalle cooling lake. The water is then pumped to cool various pieces of plant equipment. The water is not used for reactor cooling during normal operations.

One system, called the essential service water system, would draw water from the intake building to provide cooling for plant safety systems if they were needed. These safety systems include the emergency diesel generators and heat exchangers for the reactor cooling system which is used when the plant is shut down. The NRC authorized the plant to continue cooling the reactor using each unit's main condenser rather than use the shutdown cooling system which requires operation of the essential service water system.

On Friday, June 28, the utility found the foam material at the bottom of the water in the intake building, near where the essential service water system would draw its water. Previously, it was believed that the foam was at the top of the water where it would not affect the essential service water system.

Both LaSalle units were then shut down because of the potential that the foam material could restrict water flow in the essential service water system if it were needed to cool plant

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safety components. Extensive testing of the essential service water system equipment, however, had previously shown that it would perform successfully.

Commonwealth Edison is currently locating and removing the foam material from the structure using divers.

The NRC Augmented Inspection Team will begin its activities July 1 with additional team members arriving on July 2. When its onsite inspection is completed the team will hold a meeting with the utility to discuss its preliminary findings. This meeting will be open to public observation. The time and place of the meeting will be announced later.

The team will issue a written report of its findings several weeks after the completion of the inspection.

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