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Contact: [Roger Hannah](#), 404-997-4417

[Joey Ledford](#), 404-997-4416

NRC Issues Confirmatory Order to Westinghouse Columbia Fuel Facility

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a [confirmatory order](#) to Westinghouse Electric Company that addresses issues stemming from a 2016 event at the company's Columbia, S.C., fuel fabrication facility.

In May 2016, plant employees discovered an accumulation of uranium-bearing material in a scrubber system, which is designed to remove unwanted material from a number of plant processes. After an analysis showed the amount of uranium exceeded safety limits, the NRC launched an inspection and later issued a confirmatory action letter, or CAL, which outlined a series of corrective actions. Some of those actions have been completed and others have been incorporated into the new confirmatory order.

The NRC conducted additional inspections last fall and identified several violations of NRC requirements. Westinghouse officials chose to participate in the NRC Alternative Dispute Resolution process, and the order is the result of a settlement under that process. The NRC ADR process is facilitated by a neutral third party with no decision-making authority who assists the NRC and the licensee in reaching an agreement when there are differences regarding an enforcement action. A mediation session between the NRC staff and Westinghouse was held May 19 and discussions between the two parties continued until early August. The order captures the details of the settlement reached during those discussions.

Under the order, Westinghouse has taken and agreed to take a number of corrective actions, including a survey of the safety culture among employees at the site, improvements and modifications to scrubbers and other systems to minimize the likelihood of a similar accumulation, and development of additional methods to provide early indications of abnormal accumulations.

In consideration of the commitments contained in the order, the NRC will not issue a civil penalty or cite the company for the violations, although Westinghouse officials acknowledged that the violations occurred. The company has also agreed to provide the NRC with a notification letter once it has completed the terms of the order and the basis for concluding that the order has been satisfied.