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NRC Begins Special Inspection at Urenco USA Facility

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has launched a special inspection at the Urenco USA uranium enrichment facility in Eunice, New Mexico, to review the circumstances involving a March 2 event during which construction vehicles entered a controlled area before appropriate physical barriers were in place.

The facility remains safe, and the incident did not result in an increased risk to public health and safety. The event warrants additional NRC inspection because it involved a potential breakdown of controls designed to prevent chemical, radiological, and criticality hazards – the primary concern at U.S. fuel cycle facilities.

Staff at NRC-regulated nuclear fuel cycle facilities are required to perform a detailed [safety analysis](#) to identify potential hazards, accident sequences, and other physical and human factors that could potentially compromise safety. Licensees then assign items relied on for safety to the hazards identified to prevent potential accidents at a facility.

The inspection began today, and two inspectors from the NRC's Region II office in Atlanta are at the Urenco USA plant. Over several days, the inspectors will develop a timeline of the event and review the company's root cause investigation. The inspection will also verify that the company responded appropriately by their established emergency and safeguards contingency plans and has a plan to prevent a recurrence.

The inspection team will document their findings and conclusions in a public report typically issued within 45 days of the completion of the inspection.