NRC NEWS

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Office of Public Affairs Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, DC 20555-0001 E-mail: opa@nrc.gov

Web Site: http://www.nrc.gov/OPA

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NRC REVISES PROCEDURE FOR INSPECTION OF ELECTRICAL CIRCUITS FOR SAFE REACTOR SHUTDOWN

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has informed nuclear power plant operators about changes to its inspections for electrical circuits necessary to safely shut down reactors after a fire.

The changes focus inspection resources on circuits where failures are more likely to occur, and are described in Revision 1 to Regulatory Issue Summary (RIS) 2004-03, which was issued Dec. 29, 2004. The revision replaces the earlier RIS on this subject, and covers all of a nuclear plant's post-fire, safe-shutdown circuits.

"NRC inspectors are using the revised procedures in their triennial fire inspections; the circuit portion of which was suspended while we revised our regulations, but it resumes this month," said Suzanne Black, Director of the Division of Systems Safety and Analysis in the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. "All nuclear power plants have fire protection plans, and our inspections will ensure the plants continue to meet their commitments to protect public health and safety."

Under the new procedures, inspectors will verify, using credible fire scenarios, that one set of safe-shutdown systems would remain free of fire damage. If an inspector discovers a circuit configuration where failure could affect a plant's ability to safely shut down, the RIS provides information on addressing the issue and maintaining public health and safety until repairs or modifications can be made. If such a circuit configuration issue is not resolved, enforcement action may be taken.

The RIS is available electronically on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/gen-comm/reg-issues/2004/ . The NRC's Public Document Room (phone 800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737) can help interested persons obtain material.

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