NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Office of Public Affairs Telephone: 301/415-8200
Washington, D.C. 20555-0001 E-mail: opa@nrc.gov
Web Site: http://www.nrc.gov

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NRC, FERC COMMISSIONERS TO DISCUSS GRID RELIABILITY APRIL 24 IN WASHINGTON

Commissioners and staff from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will meet April 24 in FERC's offices to discuss the interrelationship between the nation's electricity grid and the operation of U.S. commercial nuclear power plants.

The blackout of Aug. 14, 2003, caused nine U.S. nuclear power plants to shut down. Similar to non-nuclear facilities, when the grid is lost or significantly degraded, the protective circuits of the nuclear reactor and the turbine generator automatically shut down the plant to protect equipment. Nuclear facilities are designed with backup power sources, typically emergency diesel generators, to provide power to essential safety systems. During the blackout, diesel generators kept the nine plants in a safe condition.

Both the NRC and FERC participated in a joint U.S.-Canada task force that reviewed the blackout. The agencies signed a Memorandum of Agreement on Sept. 1, 2004, to facilitate their collaboration concerning the nation's electric grid reliability, as well as addressing the task force's recommendations.

The meeting will run from 2 p.m to 4 p.m. in FERC's Commission Meeting Room at 888 First St. NE, Washington, D.C. In addition to discussions between the Commissioners, NRC staff will discuss issues including the concept of adding new reactors to the grid and the recently issued Generic Letter 2006-02 on grid reliability, while FERC staff will discuss issues including the agency's recent Interpretive Order related to the Generic Letter. The public is invited to attend the meeting, which will also be available on FERC's Web site, http://www.ferc.gov .

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