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NRC DETERMINES INSPECTION FINDING FOR OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT TO BE OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has determined that an inspection finding for the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant pertaining to security should be characterized as "white," meaning it is an issue of low to moderate safety significance but one which may require additional NRC inspections. The plant, located in Lacey Township, N.J., is operated by AmerGen Energy Company.

The inspection finding is based on NRC assessment of a security exercise conducted at the plant in May. An NRC team observed and evaluated four force-on-force drills at that time and determined that during one of those exercises, the response strategy was insufficient to successfully thwart an adversary force.

During a regulatory conference with NRC staff to discuss the finding in August, plant managers contended the problem was the result of artificialities introduced during the drill. However, NRC staff, after careful consideration, found that artificialities were not a sufficient basis for a change in the assessment because, among other reasons, they are largely within the company's control.

Under the agency's significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of severity, beginning with "green" and progressing in severity to "white," "yellow" or "red." Any finding of white or above could result in additional inspections.

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