



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES FINDING OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE ON FERMI NUCLEAR PLANT VIOLATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has determined that a violation of NRC regulations at the Fermi 2 Nuclear Power Station should be characterized as “white,” meaning that it is an issue of low to moderate importance to safety. The plant, located in Newport, Michigan, is operated by Detroit Edison Company.

The violation concerned a March 21 bearing failure on an emergency diesel generator during a test. NRC staff members concluded that earlier modifications to the diesel generator caused the oil level indicator to give an incorrect reading, which led to the inadequate lubrication and failure of the bearing. The diesel generator is one of four at Fermi 2 which can supply power to plant safety systems if there is a loss of offsite electrical power. The diesel generator was subsequently repaired.

Under the safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with green and progressing to white, yellow or red.

A NRC inspection, completed June 30, reached a preliminary assessment of the bearing failure as a “white” finding - one of low to moderate importance to safety. The letter transmitting the report provided the company with an opportunity to either request a regulatory conference to discuss this issue with NRC staff or to respond in writing. Detroit Edison officials’ response did not contest the “white” characterization of the safety significance of this finding and officials chose not to meet with the NRC staff.

On July 27, the NRC completed a supplemental inspection on this issue to review the bearing problem further, and it was determined that the problem had been resolved.

In a September 14 letter to the company, Region III Administrator Jim Dyer said, “The inspection (referring to the July 27 supplemental inspection) led to our conclusion that your evaluations and corrective actions adequately addressed the identified root causes.”

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