



NRC NEWS

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CONTACT: Diane Screnci, (610) 337-5330/e-mail: dps@nrc.gov
Neil A. Sheehan, (610) 337-5331/e-mail: nas@nrc.gov

NRC TO SEND SPECIAL INSPECTION TO MILLSTONE 1 TO EVALUATE INVESTIGATION INTO MISSING SPENT FUEL

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is sending a team to Millstone Unit 1 to evaluate the comprehensiveness of Northeast Utilities' investigation into the circumstances surrounding the loss of two fuel rods. The NRC team will arrive at the Millstone plant, in Waterford, Conn., on Tuesday. The four-member team will spend about two-weeks on site and also will evaluate the company's root cause analysis.

Northeast Utilities (NU) had been the operator of the three nuclear units at Millstone Station until the plants were sold, and the operating license transferred to, Dominion Nuclear last spring.

On December 15, of last year, Northeast Utilities informed the NRC in writing that it could not account for two spent fuel rods which had been stored in the Millstone Unit 1 spent fuel pool. Records indicate the rods were last verified to be in the pool in 1980, however there was no documentation of their presence in the pool beyond that time.

NU conducted an investigation to determine the whereabouts of the missing rods and provided it to Dominion. This week, a report was sent to the NRC by Dominion indicating that, although the exact location of the rods could not be determined, it's likely they're at one of four sites, including two low-level waste disposal sites and two spent fuel pools, one of which is at Millstone 1. Dominion also made a formal notification to the NRC Operations Center, as required by NRC regulations.

Since receiving the notification from NU, the NRC has been closely following the company's efforts to find the missing rods through onsite inspections and routine conference calls. In addition, the agency has also maintained a liaison with the appropriate states.

Neither the companies nor the NRC believe the material was stolen. There are significant radiological security controls at nuclear power plants such as Millstone that make theft dangerous, difficult and highly unlikely. The NRC does not believe that a public health and safety problem exists based on the likely locations of the spent fuel rods. Furthermore, the rods would not pose any risk of proliferating nuclear weapons due to their low uranium and plutonium content.

The NRC team will issue an inspection report about 30 days of the completion of the inspection.

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