



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION III

801 Warrenville Road

Lisle IL 60532

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

No. III-01-054

November 21, 2001

CONTACT: Jan Strasma (630)829-9663/e-mail: rjs2@nrc.gov
Pam Alloway-Mueller (630)829-9662/e-mail: pla@nrc.gov

NRC STAFF TO MEET WITH NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT CO. NOV. 27 TO DISCUSS SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE OF DIESEL PROBLEM AT MINNESOTA PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet November 27 in Lisle, Illinois, with Nuclear Management Company officials to discuss the safety significance of NRC inspection findings concerning damage to an emergency diesel generator during testing in April at the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Station. The two-reactor facility is located near Red Wing, Minnesota.

The meeting, called a Regulatory Conference, will be at 1 p.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room of the NRC's Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, in Lisle. The meeting is open to public observation. Members of the NRC staff will be available following the meeting to answer questions from the public and the news media.

The NRC staff has preliminarily evaluated the findings as being "white" - having low to moderate safety significance. The agency uses a four-color scale to evaluate inspection findings: green, white, yellow, and red in order of increasing safety significance.

During a test of a Unit 2 emergency diesel generator on April 9, the plant staff observed unexpected operating conditions and shut the diesel down. Subsequently, the plant staff determined that damage to diesel components had occurred as a result of an incompatibility of the fuel oil and the lubricating oil used in the diesel. When the company decided that the problem could also affect the second Unit 2 diesel generator, the plant was shut down on May 9 to repair the two diesel generators.

Unit 1 has two diesel generators of a different design and was not affected. The emergency diesel generators are designed to supply electrical power to plant safety systems in the event of a loss of normal electrical power sources.

An NRC inspection in May found that the plant's corrective action program had failed to properly identify and resolve previous indications of the oil compatibility issue.

The purpose of a regulatory conference is to discuss the concern about a potential problem and its causes, the proposed safety significance categorization, and the apparent violation. The licensee -- in this case the Nuclear Management Company -- is provided with an opportunity to clarify aspects of the NRC inspection report, as necessary, and to outline its proposed corrective action. The NRC staff will later make a final determination of the significance. A "white" finding can lead to additional inspections or meetings with the company.

#####