



NRC NEWS

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

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NRC STAFF TO MEET WITH NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT CO. TO DISCUSS SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE OF COOLING SYSTEM ISSUE AT POINT BEACH PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet April 29 in Lisle, Illinois, with representatives of Nuclear Management Company to discuss the safety significance of a potential failure in an auxiliary cooling system at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Station. The two-reactor facility is located near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

The NRC staff has completed a preliminary assessment of the problem and concluded that it is of "high safety significance." The meeting, called a Regulatory Conference, will seek the utility's evaluation of its significance. The NRC's preliminary assessment was previously announced in News Release III-02-17, issued April 8.

The meeting will be held at 9 a.m. (CDT) in the NRC's Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle. Visitors should report first to the Second Floor reception area. The meeting is open to public observation; before the meeting is adjourned, members of the public may ask questions and provide comments.

The meeting will also be available for viewing by video conference in Room O-3B4 of the NRC's Headquarters Office, One White Flint North, 11555 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland.

NRC inspectors determined that the auxiliary cooling water system might fail to function under certain abnormal conditions. Normal plant operations were not affected by the problem, which was initially discovered by plant personnel in November of last year.

The utility took prompt corrective actions to revise procedures and train reactor operators to address the immediate safety concerns. The auxiliary feedwater system was subsequently modified to further correct the problem.

NRC inspection findings are evaluated using a four-level scale of safety significance, ranging from "green" for a finding of minor significance, through "white" and "yellow" to "red," for a finding of high safety significance.

The NRC's preliminary evaluation determined the Point Beach cooling system problem to be a "red" finding. Information presented by the utility in the Regulatory Conference will be used by the NRC staff, along with its inspection findings, to determine the final safety significance of the problem.

The final determination of the safety significance will be posted on the NRC's web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/POIN1/poin1_chart.html

“Red” inspection findings can lead to additional NRC inspections and further meetings with the utility to review plant performance.

The auxiliary feedwater system is used to safely shut down the reactor if problems occur during plant operations and to continue removing heat from the reactor after shutdown.

The details of the NRC inspection findings are discussed in Inspection Report 2001-17 which is available online in the NRC's electronic reading room. This report -- with the accession number ML020950889 -- may be viewed in the NRC's ADAMS document system, accessible at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>.

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