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From: Nuclear Communications
Sent: Wednesday, May 05, 2004 9:16 AM
To: ENTNBU
Subject: FYI | Hope Creek At 100% - A message from Mike Brothers
Importance: High



Hope Creek At 100% **A message from Mike Brothers**

During the most recent Hope Creek maintenance outage, we installed new monitoring equipment in the station because we believed equipment issues in the plant might have resulted from high vibrations. Based on some assumptions as to the cause of the vibrations, Engineering developed some specific limits – i.e. as long as we were operating within these limits safety would not be compromised. We were in power ascension and tracking the results against the criteria when an engineer recognized that the assumptions we used to calculate the limits were incorrect. This was a good catch by the engineer. At that point, we adjusted power back to 75%, where we were assured that all vibration levels would be below the most restrictive acceptance criteria.

On Thursday, April 29, our Station Operations Review Committee (SORC) met and reviewed engineering's revised limits, which were based on GE's allowable limits for both displacement and velocity. These limits were then compared against the data we had received and we were within the safe margins for operating at higher power levels. That afternoon we began power ascension at Hope Creek and achieved 100% power over last weekend. We continue to monitor the vibration data and will take any required actions if needed.

A logical question from employees could be 'Why is this safe today if it wasn't safe just last week?' The fact is, it was safe to raise power all along – we just did not have the data to support that decision. Since we just now started tracking this data, it could be that this is just how our plant operates.

It is important for employees to understand how the decision was made. Absent an understanding, employees could easily perceive that management was simply adjusting the limits to keep the unit on line and ascend to full power.

This was the message that some employees took from the Hope Creek Off Gas Flow issue from March of last year. In that issue, Operations detected flow that exceeded the procedural guidance limits which some felt should have forced the unit offline. Rather than bring the unit down, the organization reestablished the safe limit and continued to operate. The limit was subsequently changed back after the condition was corrected in the outage. Since the reason for changing the procedural limit was not clearly communicated or understood, to the employees, this represented non-conservative decision-making, driven by management's desire to keep the plant running, no matter what.

To establish a strong safety conscious work environment, employees must understand why decisions are made, particularly as they relate to power operations. If you are not clear about how we made the decision to reestablish the limit and raise power at Hope Creek, please call me, or Jim Hutton.

I also received some feedback on the message I put out on April 19 regarding the Hope Creek Outage (see what follows.) A technician who was very familiar with the problems we were experiencing on the chillers brought it to my attention that this was a long-standing issue, one he had tried to get resolved in the past. He was disappointed that I would characterize it as just coming to our attention. I looked into the issue and he is right.

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We have known about the problems with our chillers for some time and there was no reason that their unavailability should have ever been allowed to affect our performance. We have two chillers back in service (the third one later today) and we know what is needed to make them all reliable – this just should not have been done in the 11th hour.

Hope Creek Plant Status, April 19

A Message From Mike Brothers, VP Site Operations

In the process of returning Hope Creek to service, we identified problems with our turbine building chillers. These chillers are used to keep the drywell and turbine building cool (within tech spec temperature limits) during normal operations, and we currently have only one chiller, the 'D' chiller, that is reliable.

We have made a management decision to keep the unit at a reduced power level until at least one other chiller is returned to a reliable operating status, meaning we have completed the repair on that chiller AND have completed a reliability run. While the 'D' chiller is capable of providing cooling for the unit at higher power levels, any unplanned problems with the 'D' chiller could cause a significant challenge for Operations personnel if we were at a higher power level. By keeping the unit at reduced power, even if the chiller trips offline, we can maintain the temperature within tech specs with backup systems, while methodically reducing power if required.

Maintenance, Engineering and Operations are working on resolving the problems with all three chillers in parallel to complete the repairs and the operability tests. We expect to have the 'A' chiller back by Thursday, the 'B' back by Friday, and the 'C' over the weekend.

From a business standpoint, with the higher temperature we have seen over the past few days, this is not the time for our units to be at reduced power. However, as we have said on numerous occasions, we will not allow short-term decisions to compromise our long-term future. Once we are confident we have a second chiller available for contingencies, we will increase reactor power to 100%.

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