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NRC CONDUCTING SPECIAL INSPECTION AT SEABROOK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The NRC has begun a Special Inspection at the Seabrook nuclear power plant to inspect and assess an event that occurred at the facility on Aug. 31. On that day, the plant was shut down in accordance with operating procedures after two emergency diesel generators experienced problems with their voltage controls. Throughout the event, all off-site power lines and a pair of smaller supplemental diesel generators were available.

After repairs were made and the generators were returned to service, the reactor was restarted on Sept. 3 and returned to power operations on Sept. 4.

The Special Inspection team includes two specialists from Region I supported by the NRC Resident Inspectors at the plant and Regional Risk Analysts. One phase of the inspection started today at the Seabrook, N.H., site. The inspectors will be tasked with evaluating the circumstances associated with the Aug. 31st event. Among other things, they will independently assess the apparent causes that contributed to the failure of the emergency diesel generators and review the company's root cause evaluation of what took place.

Nuclear power plants produce electricity which is fed into the grid. However, they also take back some of that power for the operation of safety systems. In the event that off-site power is lost, the plant would turn to its backup sources of energy, including its emergency diesel generators, to shut down the plant. As such, the generators play an important role in plant safety.

Phases of the inspection will occur over the next several weeks. The inspection report will be issued within 45 days after the exit meeting of the inspection.

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