



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. IV-11-042

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September 19, 2011

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NRC TO HOLD REGULATORY CONFERENCE WITH ENTERGY OPERATIONS, INC.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold a regulatory conference with representatives of Entergy Operations, Inc., on Oct. 3 to discuss a preliminary finding involving the failure to use effective engineering controls to protect workers at the Waterford 3 nuclear plant from unnecessary radiation exposure. The plant is located near New Orleans, La.

The conference will begin at 9 a.m. at the NRC's Region IV office, 612 East Lamar Blvd., Suite 400, Arlington, Texas. During the conference, the company will have an opportunity to address the preliminary finding identified during an NRC inspection. The public is invited to observe the meeting. NRC officials will be available before the conclusion of the meeting to answer questions.

According to an NRC inspection, officials at the plant failed to use effective engineering controls as part of their pre-job planning to reduce contamination and subsequent exposure to workers during a refueling outage in the fall of 2009. Specifically, they failed to keep highly radioactive water from leaking onto work areas around the reactor coolant pumps, despite having knowledge that this could occur.

NRC regulations require that radiation exposures be limited to As Low As Reasonably Achievable. (ALARA). The failure resulted in high levels of radioactive contamination and unexpected and unintended radiation doses to plant workers. None of the workers received radiation doses in excess of NRC requirements.

The NRC evaluates performance at nuclear plants with a color-coded process which classifies regulatory findings as either green, white, yellow, or red, in order of increasing safety significance. The NRC has preliminarily determined that the finding was "white," or of low to moderate safety significance.

The decision to hold a regulatory conference does not mean that a final determination has been made that a finding has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. The purpose is to discuss the preliminary finding, causes and safety significance, to provide the licensee with an opportunity to point out any errors, if any, in the NRC inspection report and to enable the company to outline its corrective actions.

No decision on the preliminary finding or any contemplated enforcement action will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later date.

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