



NRC NEWS

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT BYRON NUCLEAR STATION TO REVIEW CORROSION AND LEAKAGE OF EQUIPMENT COOLING WATER PIPING

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection at the Byron Nuclear Power Station to review the circumstance surrounding the corrosion of piping in the equipment cooling water system and subsequent leak in one pipe. The two-reactor station, which is located near Byron, Ill., is operated by Exelon Generation Co.

As a result of the leakage, reactor operators shut both reactors down on Friday, Oct. 19, to repair the leak and inspect similar pipes. The pipes carry water from the plant where it is used for cooling of essential safety equipment back to basins under fan-driven cooling towers. Other systems provide cooling water to the reactors.

The NRC inspectors will review the utility's previous inspections of the eight similar pipes in the system, called the essential service water system. Corrosion had previously been observed on the exterior of the pipes and plant workers were performing further inspections and tests when the leak developed. The cooling water carried by the pipes is not radioactive.

"The inspection team will consider the utility's handling of the pipe corrosion and the decision-making which led to the shut down of the two reactors," said James Caldwell, NRC Region III Administrator. "Our resident inspectors were onsite during the reactor shutdown, and reported that all safety systems functioned normally during the shutdown."

The NRC team will also monitor the utility's ongoing analysis of the pipe corrosion and leakage and any repair activities.

A written inspection report will be issued four to six weeks following the completion of the inspection. It will be available on the NRC web site – www.nrc.gov – and from the NRC Region III Office of Public Affairs.

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