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NRC to Begin Special Inspection at Fort Calhoun Nuclear Station

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection at the Fort Calhoun nuclear plant to review circumstances surrounding a June 5 reported failure of an auxiliary feedwater valve that controls water flow to the steam generator. The plant, operated by Omaha Public Power District, is located 19 miles north of Omaha, Neb.

During a refueling outage, workers replaced seal material in a valve that controls cooling water flow into one of the steam generators. During testing, the valve failed to open as designed. Workers discovered that the new seal material was not adequate for the operating temperature of the valve. The seal material was replaced with a material rated for higher temperatures. Following successful testing, the plant resumed start up activities.

“The purpose of this special inspection is to better understand the circumstances surrounding the valve failure, determine if the licensee’s extent of condition review was sufficiently comprehensive, and review the licensee’s corrective actions to ensure that the causes of the failure have been effectively addressed,” NRC Region IV Administrator Marc Dapas said.

The NRC staff determined that a special inspection is warranted because the valve provides an important safety function in the mitigation of plant events.

NRC inspectors will spend about a week on site evaluating the licensee’s root cause analysis, extent of condition review, and the adequacy of corrective actions as well as the quality of engineering assessments associated with the replacement of various plant components. An inspection report documenting the team’s findings will be publicly available within 45 days of the end of the inspection.