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CONTACT: Victor Dricks, 817-200-1128

NRC Begins Special Inspection at Grand Gulf Nuclear Station

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection at the Grand Gulf Nuclear Station to review circumstances surrounding several recent operational events. The plant, operated by Entergy Operations, Inc. and located in Port Gibson, Miss., has been shut down since Sept. 8.

“The purpose of this special inspection is to better understand the circumstances surrounding several recent operational events to determine if operator response was appropriate,” NRC Region IV Administrator Kriss Kennedy said. “We will also review the licensee’s corrective actions to ensure that their causes, including associated equipment problems and any contributing operator actions, have been effectively addressed.”

On Sept. 23, following maintenance on the residual heat removal system, workers discovered that a misalignment of valves had rendered the plant’s alternate decay heat removal system unavailable. Technical specifications require that the alternate system be available when one of the plant’s two residual heat removal systems is out of service. The system is used to remove decay heat from the reactor following shutdown. The following day, when preparing to restart the reactor, control room operators caused an unexpected increase in reactor vessel water level due to a misalignment of valves.

On Sept. 27, Entergy decided that the facility would remain shut down until they were satisfied with corrective actions to improve operations.

Three NRC inspectors will spend about a week on site evaluating the licensee’s root cause analysis and the adequacy of corrective actions to address performance issues. An inspection report documenting the team’s findings will be publicly available within 45 days of the end of the inspection.