



NRC NEWS

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT THE DC COOK NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is conducting a special inspection at the DC Cook Nuclear Power Station to review circumstances around a turbine generator fire and degradation of the fire suppression system. The two-unit plant is operated by American Electric Power and is located in Stevensville, Mich.

On Sept. 20, 2008, a malfunction in the Unit 1 turbine generator resulted in a fire and caused the operators to manually shut down the reactor. The turbine generator transforms steam into electricity. All nuclear safety systems functioned as expected and were not affected by the fire which occurred in a building separate from the nuclear reactor.

The utility declared an unusual event, the lowest of NRC's four emergency classifications, when the fire could not be extinguished within 15 minutes. The fire was extinguished 25 minutes after it started. There were no injuries and no hazard to the public.

After the fire was extinguished, operators received a signal indicating a problem with the fire suppression system. The cause of the problem was a rupture in the pipe which is a source of water for the plant's fire protection systems. Alternate sources of water were available for fire suppression in case they were needed.

The four-person special inspection team will review the causes for the turbine generator malfunction, the fire, and the problems with the fire suppression system. The special inspection team will also review the utility's corrective actions.

"Plant operators took quick action to safely shut down the reactor and activate the fire suppression system," said Regional Administrator James Caldwell. "However, we seek to gain a more thorough understanding of what caused the turbine problems and the fire, as well as the causes of the degradation of the plant's fire suppression system."

The duration of a special inspection cannot be determined in advance. The average duration of a special inspection is seven days. The inspection report will be issued about 45 days after the inspection is complete. It will be available through the NRC RIII Office of Public Affairs and at the NRC web site: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>.

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