



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.

www.nrc.gov

No. I-06-065

Contact: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

December 20, 2006

E-mail: opal@nrc.gov

NRC FINALIZES “WHITE” FINDING FOR VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR PLANT OVER SHIPMENT OF RADIOACTIVELY CONTAMINATED EQUIPMENT

The Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant will receive additional oversight from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission based on a violation involving a shipment of radioactively contaminated equipment. The violation, which has now been finalized, stems from a shipment that went from Vermont Yankee to a Pennsylvania nuclear power plant last summer.

The NRC uses a color-coded system to categorize inspection findings. They range from “green,” for a very low safety issue, to “red,” for a highly significant safety issue. In this case, the Vermont Yankee violation has been determined to be “white,” which signifies the issue is of low to moderate safety significance. The finding is based on an inspection the NRC carried out from Sept. 6 through Oct. 6, 2006.

On Aug. 31, 2006, Vermont Yankee, which is located in Vernon, Vt., and operated by Entergy, prepared and shipped a package containing a radioactively contaminated control rod crusher/shearer to the Susquehanna nuclear power plant, in Salem Township, Pa. U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements apply to such shipments. DOT requires that this type of shipment be prepared so the radiation level on any external surface of the package not exceed 200 millirems per hour.

However, upon arrival at the Susquehanna plant on Sept. 1, 2006, the radiation level at a location on the bottom exterior surface of the package was measured at about 820 millirems per hour. It was later determined that during transit, discrete highly radioactive particles shifted to the bottom of the package, resulting in the radiation levels in excess of the DOT limits. It is important to note that no actual public radiation exposure occurred during the shipment from Vermont to Pennsylvania because the affected package surface was inaccessible to members of the public.

“The actual condition did not involve an exposure or hazard to the public, but it had the potential to adversely affect personnel who would normally receive the package or respond to an incident involving the package since responders could have a reasonable expectation that the package conformed with DOT radiation limits,” NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins wrote to Entergy in a letter regarding the enforcement action. “In addition, it was fortuitous that the surface of the package was inaccessible to the public during transport.”

The company did not request a regulatory conference on this matter but is required to respond to the violation within 30 days.

The NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection at a future date to evaluate the company's corrective actions.

###

News releases are available through a free list serve subscription at the following Web address: <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/listserver.html> . The NRC homepage at www.nrc.gov also offers a SUBSCRIBE link. E-mail notifications are sent to subscribers when news releases are posted to NRC's Web site.