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NRC SENDS AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM TO REVIEW ELECTRICAL BREAKERS ISSUE AT ALABAMA NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is sending an Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) to review the failures of electrical breakers for component cooling water pumps at the Farley nuclear power plant, operated by Southern Nuclear Operating Company near Dothan in southern Alabama. The component cooling water system circulates water through a closed system, similar to the cooling system in a car, to cool many plant systems and components.

An AIT is formed to review the circumstances surrounding more significant issues at NRC-licensed facilities. The NRC inspection team includes inspectors and specialists from the agency's Region II office in Atlanta and the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Md. The team is expected to spend about a week at the site and will hold a public exit meeting to present the preliminary inspection results a few days later. In addition, a written report will be issued within 30 days of the end of inspection.

On September 4 and 5, two different electrical breakers associated with component cooling water pumps on Unit 1 failed to close during testing. The breakers were replaced and Southern Nuclear is troubleshooting the failed breakers. Because the Farley plant has experienced previous breaker issues and this condition has the potential to be applicable to similar breakers in safety-related systems on both Unit 1 and Unit 2, the NRC staff determined an AIT was appropriate.

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