



NRC NEWS

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION OF PUMP ISSUES AT PERRY NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection of the circumstances surrounding problems with two pumps which led to the shutdown of the Perry Nuclear Power Plant early Thursday (Jan. 6). The plant, operated by FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Co., is in Perry, Ohio.

Reactor operators shut down the plant after two recirculation pumps unexpectedly shifted speed, and one of the pumps shut down. The recirculation pumps increase the rate at which water flows through the reactor to increase the efficiency and power level of the reactor. The recirculation system does not have a reactor safety function.

During the reactor shutdown, reactor operators were unable to start another pump, used to pump cooling water into the reactor. The operators then started a backup cooling system to maintain reactor cooling. There was no leakage of reactor cooling water, and no hazard to plant workers or the public associated with the shutdown.

The four-person NRC inspection team will begin its review today (Jan. 7), monitoring the utility's investigation and repair activities. The NRC resident inspectors have also been following the event since early Thursday, shortly after the plant shut down.

The recirculation pumps have two speeds, a low speed for lower reactor power levels and a high speed for higher power levels. The unexpected speed change reduced the rate of water flow through the reactor, immediately reducing the power level from 100 percent to 46 percent.

The unexpected speed change was similar to an event which occurred December 23. The utility determined that problem may have been caused by a faulty circuit card in the control system for the recirculation pumps. The card was replaced, and the utility has continued its review of the event.

The NRC inspectors will also review the December 23 incident as part of its inspection.

An inspection report will be issued about 30 days following the completion of the NRC inspection. The report will be publicly available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System, or ADAMS, at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Use Docket Number 05000440 to locate the report. Help in using ADAMS is available from the NRC Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209.

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