



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Region IV

1600 E. Lamar Blvd.

Arlington, TX 76011-4511

Telephone: (817) 860-8100

Site: www.nrc.gov

Blog: <http://public-blog.nrc-gateway.gov>

No. IV-12-005

January 25, 2012

Contact: Victor Dricks (817) 200-1128

E-Mail: OPA4.Resource@nrc.gov

Lara Uselding (817) 200-1519

NRC TO SEND AUGMENTED INSPECTION TEAM TO WOLF CREEK NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will send an Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) to the Wolf Creek Nuclear Generating Station to review the circumstances surrounding an automatic reactor trip and loss of offsite power that occurred there on Jan. 13. The plant is located near Burlington, Kan.

Just after 2 p.m. on Jan. 13, officials at the Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Co., declared a Notice of Unusual Event after the failure of a main generator electrical breaker, followed by an unexplained loss of power to an electrical transformer. This caused the switchyard to become de-energized, which removed the plant's connection to the electrical power grid. The emergency diesel generators automatically started and powered safety-related equipment. An Unusual Event is the lowest of four NRC emergency categories.

At 5:09 p.m. on January 13, Wolf Creek terminated the Unusual Event after off-site power was partially restored. Plant personnel are continuing to investigate the cause of the failure and determine necessary repairs. There were no radiological releases due to the event.

NRC resident inspectors responded to the control room to monitor site activities during the event and were onsite last weekend to monitor licensee activities and initial recovery actions.

AIT's are used by the NRC to review more significant events or issues at NRC-licensed facilities. The six-member team has assumed responsibility from the resident inspectors for gathering information about the shutdown event and will travel to the site in the coming weeks. The team will include inspectors from the NRC's Region IV office, NRC Headquarters in Rockville, Md., and resident inspectors from other plants. The team will be led by NRC Region IV Branch Chief Mark Haire of the Division of Reactor Safety.

"An AIT is used when the NRC wants to promptly dig deeply into the circumstances surrounding an operational event," said NRC Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. "We

want to make sure that all of the circumstances that contributed to this event are well understood in order to prevent a recurrence.”

The team will put together a detailed chronology of the event, evaluate the adequacy of licensee actions in response to the incident and assess the impact of the prolonged loss of off-site power to non-safety related equipment. The team’s report will not contain inspection findings, but will identify areas for further inspection follow-up.

The NRC will hold a public exit meeting with the licensee upon completion of the inspection to discuss its preliminary findings. The meeting will be open to interested members of the public and the news media, and team members will be available to answer questions after the results are presented. The AIT will also issue a written report within 30 days of completion of the inspection.

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