



NRC NEWS

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2443 Warrenville Road

Lisle IL 60532

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov> E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov

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CONTACT: Jan Strasma (630) 829-9663
Viktoria Mitlyng (630) 829-9662

NRC SPECIAL INSPECTION INTO CAUSES OF REACTOR SHUTDOWN AND ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT PROBLEMS AT CLINTON

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection into the circumstances surrounding an automatic reactor shutdown and unexpected response of some plant equipment to the shutdown at the Clinton Nuclear Power Plant. The plant, located in Clinton, Ill., is operated by Exelon Nuclear Generation Company.

On July 13, an automatic reactor shutdown occurred as a result of a trip of the main power transformer. The transformer trip was caused by a lightning strike which led to a disturbance on the electric grid. The main transformer connects the power from the plant generator to the electric grid.

All plant safety systems responded normally during the shutdown, although several components did not perform as expected.

A further problem occurred on July 14, when the level of water cooling the reactor core unexpectedly dropped about two feet. After the drop, the level of reactor coolant remained at approximately 14 feet above the top of the reactor and was sufficient to cool the reactor core effectively and not pose a risk to public health and safety. It was then promptly restored to its normal level.

The NRC dispatched a special inspection to the plant to better understand the cause of the reactor shutdown and the resulting equipment malfunctions and to ensure that problems associated with the incident are addressed by the plant.

"While safety was never in question in these incidents, we want to learn as much as possible to ensure that the issues are fully understood. If there are lessons to be learned from this examination we want to share them across the spectrum of reactor operators," said James Caldwell, regional administrator of NRC Region III office in Lisle, Ill.

The NRC inspection team includes two inspectors from the Region III office in Lisle, Ill., and the resident inspector assigned to the Clinton plant.

The report of the inspection will be publically available when it is issued, about 30 days after the close of the special inspection. The report will be posted in the NRC's electronic reading room at:

<http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> (To locate the report, once it is issued, enter the docket number for the Clinton plant (05000461) in the search phrase box.)

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