



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL OVERSIGHT TO COOPER NUCLEAR STATION

The Cooper Nuclear Station will receive additional oversight from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a result of a “white” inspection finding related to deficiencies in the plant’s fire protection plan. The plant, operated by the Nebraska Public Power District, is located near Brownville, Ne.

NRC inspectors found that two of the plant’s emergency operating procedures, used to safely shut down the plant in the event of a large fire, would not work as written because they contained steps that did not reflect the actual configuration of some plant equipment.

“As a consequence of this violation these problems would have challenged the operators’ ability to bring the plant to a cold shutdown condition in the event of certain fires,” said NRC Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. “The problem was promptly corrected.”

The NRC uses a color coded system to categorize inspection findings and performance indicators, which are objective measures of plant performance. The colors range from “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow,” and “red” depending on the safety significance of the issue. In this case, the NRC determined that the inspection finding was of “white,” or low to moderate safety significance.

The NRC requires that licensees verify and validate procedures when a procedure is changed, and periodically thereafter. An NRC triennial fire protection inspection, described in a report released on March 19, determined that the licensee performed inadequate verification and validation checks for these procedures, since they failed to ensure that all the steps would work as written. NRC inspectors identified that the electrical circuits for 10 motor operated valves had a different configuration than was assumed. During a fire, these procedures direct operators to manually reposition these valves at the electrical cabinets, because normal control room switches might not be available. It was not likely that operators would promptly notice the problem, because there were no valve position indicators available under these conditions. Some of the

valve manipulations are important to maintaining the reactor in a safe shutdown condition during certain important fire scenarios.

At the request of the licensee, a regulatory conference was held on May 13 to discuss NPPD's position on the safety significance of the finding and corrective actions. As a result, the NRC has determined that the safety significance of the violation is best characterized as "white." The licensee has 30 days to appeal the decision.

Cooper Nuclear Station has had a continuing problem with inadequate procedures, as noted in its March 3 annual assessment letter. The NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection at a future date to provide assurance that the causes for the performance deficiency are understood and verify that corrective actions are sufficient to prevent recurrence.

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