



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa. 19406

Site: <http://www.nrc.gov>

No. I-09-032

Contact: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

June 9, 2009

E-mail: opa1@nrc.gov

NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT GINNA NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has dispatched a special inspection team to the R.E. Ginna nuclear power plant in Ontario, N.Y. The four-member team will look into recent failures of the turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater pump.

The auxiliary feedwater system is a backup system that provides water to the steam generators. In the event of an accident, it is one of multiple methods designed to remove heat from the reactor when it is shutdown.

On May 26th, the auxiliary feedwater pump tripped, or automatically shut down, while workers were performing a routine quarterly test of the pump. Workers repeated the test several hours later with the pump tripping again. Constellation Energy, which operates the plant, conducted extensive troubleshooting. The company did identify and correct a number of issues with the system, but did not find the definitive cause of the trips. The system has since been successfully tested and declared operable.

“Although public health and safety was not at risk, it is important for us to understand the problems with the auxiliary feedwater pump,” said Regional Administrator Samuel J. Collins. “Our special inspection team is also tasked with reviewing the company’s corrective actions to re-establish the reliability of the pump.”

The NRC is conducting a special inspection because the turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater pump had also failed during a quarterly test on December 2, 2008. That failure was attributed to a stuck linkage in the system that controls turbine speed. An independent review by NRC inspectors found that the company had not adequately implemented its maintenance program. Yesterday (June 8), the NRC cited the company for a violation of NRC requirements for the December 2 failure. The NRC also assessed the significance of the issue and determined it to be “white,” or of low to moderate safety significance. The agency plans to conduct a separate supplemental inspection to verify the adequacy of the company’s corrective actions associated with the December 2 failure.

The NRC will issue a report within 45 days of the completion of the special inspection.

###

News releases are available through a free *listserv* subscription at the following Web address: <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/listserver.html>. The NRC homepage at www.nrc.gov also offers a SUBSCRIBE link. E-mail notifications are sent to subscribers when news releases are posted to NRC's Web site.