



NRC NEWS

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT MONTICELLO NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has started a Special Inspection to review the circumstances surrounding the blockage of a portion of the fire protection sprinkler system located outside of the reactor building, in an intake structure that houses some safety-related equipment.

The plant is operated by Northern States Power Company-Minnesota and is located in Monticello, Minn., 35 miles northwest of Minneapolis.

On Sept. 2, the company reported to the NRC that while performing testing of the intake structure fire suppression sprinkler system, workers identified blockage in a portion of the system. This piping supplies water from the Mississippi River to the sprinkler system in case of a fire in the building. The NRC staff determined that because this blockage could interfere with the sprinkler system's ability to suppress a fire that could affect safety-related equipment and because there is also a potential generic concern, a special inspection was appropriate.

The company instituted a continuous compensatory fire watch and stationed backup fire suppression equipment in the intake building to make sure the plant could respond to a fire in this location.

A three-member NRC team that includes a fire protection specialist will evaluate the condition of the fire suppression system in the intake building, the plant's compensatory measures and the root cause investigation; determine if other sprinkler systems in the plant have similar blockage; look into existence of previous occurrences of this issue and review previous corrective actions; and determine if there are generic implications for other plants.

"There is no immediate safety concern here," NRC Region III Deputy Administrator Cynthia Pederson said. "Nevertheless, we want to gain a better understanding of this issue, how and why it occurred, and its implications for Monticello and for other plants."

The NRC's special inspection report documenting the team's findings will be issued within 45 days of the inspection's completion through the [AGENCY DOCUMENTS ACCESS AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM](#) (ADAMS) at the NRC website.

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