NRC NEWS

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SALEM UNIT 1 NUCLEAR POWER PLANT TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL NRC OVERSIGHT

The Salem Unit 1 nuclear power plant, in Hancocks Bridge (Salem County), N.J., will receive additional oversight from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a result of a change in one of the indicators used by the agency to assess plant performance from "green" to "yellow." The change was the result of one of the plant's emergency diesel generators failing to start in the fourth quarter of 2007 and, during previous quarters, one instance in which an emergency diesel generator failed to run and one in which an emergency diesel generator failed to start. Emergency diesel generators provide backup power in the event of an off-site power loss; the Salem Unit 1 and Unit 2 reactors are each equipped with three of the generators.

Color-coded performance indicators and inspection findings are utilized by the NRC to evaluate plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved. In the case of performance indicators, they are updated on a quarterly basis as new plant data becomes available, with any changes reflected on the NRC's web site, www.nrc.gov .

At the end of the fourth quarter of 2007, the performance indicator for emergency AC power for Salem Unit 1, which is operated by PSEG Nuclear, LLC, changed from "green" to "yellow." The NRC posts performance indicators and inspection findings for the previous quarter on its web page not long after the start of the new quarter. Therefore, the change in the Salem Unit 1 indicator was added as of this week.

"Our actions are guided by our principle of ensuring the safety of people and the environment," NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. "A change in performance indicators, as in the case of Salem Unit 1, dictates additional NRC oversight that we will promptly carry out."

The indicator involved -- one of several mitigating systems performance indicators -- measures the availability and reliability of the plant's back-up power sources, including its emergency diesel generators. Any changes in this indicator are based on the sum of the

unavailability and the unreliability of emergency AC power supplies during the previous 12 quarters. In the last 12 quarters, there were three emergency AC power supply failures at Salem Unit 1. On Aug. 30, 2005, the 1C generator failed to run, and on March 29, 2007, and Dec. 10, 2007, the 1A and 1C generators failed to start, respectively. Although the primary contributor to the reported value relates to the August 2005 equipment issue, the failure of the 1C generator to start in December 2007 led to the performance indicator crossing the established threshold and consequently changing from "green" to "yellow."

With this change, the plant will move from the Licensee Response column of the NRC's Action Matrix to the Degraded Cornerstone column. The Action Matrix, which is available at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/actionmatrix_summary.html , is used by the agency to determine the appropriate level of oversight for nuclear power plants. The change will result in a corresponding increase in the NRC's inspection and assessment oversight at Salem Unit 1. This increased oversight will include a supplemental inspection to provide assurance that the problem has been adequately addressed.

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