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NRC FOLLOWING UP ON UNUSUAL EVENT AT INDIAN POINT 3 NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission was closely monitoring an Unusual Event at the Indian Point 3 nuclear power plant earlier today. An Unusual Event, the lowest of four levels of emergency classification, was declared at the Buchanan (Westchester County), N.Y., facility at 7:07 a.m. in response to reduced water levels at the plant's water intake structure. The Unusual Event was exited at 10:14 a.m.

The NRC's Resident Inspectors at the plant were following the event and the Incident Response Center in the agency's Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa., was activated to track developments and determine if plant operators were responding appropriately.

Like all nuclear power plants, Indian Point 3 pumps water from a nearby waterway – in this case, the Hudson River – for cooling purposes. The water, which does not come in contact with any radioactive systems and therefore does not become contaminated, is pumped back into the river after being used to cool down various systems, such as the plant's condenser.

At 5:53 a.m. today, plant control room operators received an alarm indicating a problem with the rotating screens that are used to prevent debris in the river from entering the water intake structure. At 5:57 a.m., the pumps used to wash debris off the screens, tripped off-line due to low water levels. The tide on the river was going down concurrent with these events. Another concern was icing conditions caused by freezing temperatures in the region. Cold weather conditions are expected to continue throughout the week.

Low tide occurred at 7 a.m. in the vicinity of the facility and the level in the plant's water intake structure was increasing this morning. As of 10 a.m., the intake structure water level was continuing to increase.

Both Indian Point 3 and the adjoining Indian Point 2 reactors were continuing to operate at full power. Indian Point 2 also experienced reduced water intake levels but on a less significant level than Indian Point 3.

Indian Point 3 is a 1,100-megawatt pressurized water reactor. It is owned and operated by Entergy.

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