



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES 2005 HURRICANE SEASON “LESSONS LEARNED” FINAL REPORT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission’s task force evaluating “lessons learned” from the active 2005 hurricane season has recommended the agency improve the diversity and reliability of emergency communications equipment based on the loss of land-line and most cellular communications during Hurricane Katrina. The recommendation is one of 13 included in the final report released today.

“The NRC performed well in response to the challenges of the 2005 hurricane season; however, we wanted to take a critical look at our actions to continue improving our response activities and be even better prepared for the upcoming hurricane season,” said Melvyn Leach, the task force team leader and an official in the NRC’s Office of Nuclear Security and Incident Response. “Although satellite phones allowed us to maintain contact with the plants, alternate means for reliable communications was highlighted as a particular area where improvements could – and should – be made.”

In addition to a recommendation related to communications equipment, the task force also assigned a high priority to the recommendation that the NRC improve its natural disaster response procedures for nuclear facilities and materials licensees to clearly define roles and responsibilities, and to improve dispatching of responders and site staff.

Several recommendations dealt with materials licensees and relationships with Agreement States. For example, the report recommended the NRC assess the benefit of adding latitude and longitude tracking information to the National Source Tracking System to enhance response to natural disasters.

The task force was created in November 2005 by the NRC’s Executive Director for Operations Luis Reyes to assess NRC actions related to hurricanes Katrina and Rita and their effects on nuclear power plants in Louisiana and Florida. The task force reviewed the agency’s actions to monitor the storms, interact with state officials and work with nuclear facility operators licensed by the NRC. The task force also reviewed actions related to radioactive material licensees in areas that could have been, or were, affected by the severe weather.

The task force based its recommendations on a review of agency activities and interviews with staff from the NRC and other federal agencies, nuclear power plants and state and local officials. The task force was comprised of 10 NRC staff members from headquarters and region offices.

None of the nuclear power plants in the storm's path sustained significant damage from Hurricane Katrina, although several, including Turkey Point and St. Lucie in Florida, made emergency preparations, and the Waterford nuclear power plant in Louisiana shut down and relied on emergency back-up generators when off-site power was lost.

The full report will be available through the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML060900004. ADAMS is accessible via the agency's web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> . Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC's Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR@NRC.GOV .

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