



NRC NEWS

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NRC CLOSELY MONITORING EFFORTS TO DETERMINE STATUS OF SPENT FUEL SEGMENTS UNACCOUNTED FOR AT HATCH NUCLEAR PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials said today that the agency is closely monitoring efforts by Southern Nuclear Operating Co. to determine the disposition of pieces of spent nuclear fuel which cannot be accounted for in the spent fuel storage pools at the Hatch nuclear power plant near Baxley, Ga.

Loren R. Plisco, deputy administrator of the NRC Region II office in Atlanta, said the company has reported to the NRC that it has been unable to reconcile its inventory based on an initial review of records of spent fuel storage locations and visual verifications of fuel within the plant's spent fuel pools. The company told the NRC it estimates that, collectively, the fuel rod pieces total approximately 68 inches.

"The NRC in February ordered all commercial nuclear power plant licensees to inventory their spent fuel pools," Plisco said. The company initiated its examination of the contents in May. The company completed its initial spent fuel assessment on Oct.28 and reported to the NRC today the identification of possible fuel pins and other pieces for which there was no inventory or accounting.

NRC officials said agency inspectors have been monitoring the company's progress as fuel pieces were found and collected from the spent fuel pools, beginning with the first indication of an accounting problem last May. The NRC this week has been conducting an on-site inspection of the plant's material control and accounting program as a followup to the NRC Bulletin.

Because of extensive radiological and security measures in place, NRC officials said it is highly unlikely that the material is in an uncontrolled location or that it poses any risk to the public.

The NRC said its inspectors will closely follow an exhaustive investigation of what happened to the missing pieces and of what caused the problem. The investigation may take several months.

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