



NRC NEWS

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NRC, NYPA TO DISCUSS INSPECTION FINDING AT FITZPATRICK NUCLEAR PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with New York Power Authority (NYPA) officials on Monday, February 7, to discuss an inspection finding involving a safety system at the James A. FitzPatrick nuclear power plant. NYPA operates the plant, which is located in Scriba, N.Y.

The regulatory conference, scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. in the Public Meeting Room at the NRC Region I office in King of Prussia, Pa., will be open to the public for observation. NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public following the meeting.

FitzPatrick is one of 13 plants at nine sites nationwide taking part in a pilot program for a new NRC reactor oversight process. Under the program, the NRC uses performance indicators and inspections to determine the appropriate level of regulation for each plant. Performance indicators and inspection findings can range from "green," which is the least significant, to "red," which is the most significant. Intermediate categories are "white" and "yellow." The NRC's response is commensurate with those indicators and findings.

Based on an inspection completed on November 29, the NRC issued a proposed "white" finding and determined there was an apparent violation at FitzPatrick involving inadequate testing of the high-pressure coolant injection (HPCI) system. Among the system's uses is to maintain reactor vessel water level after small loss-of-coolant accidents, provide cooling for larger loss-of-coolant accidents and back up the reactor core isolation cooling system.

The NRC preliminarily found that inadequate testing, due to a failure to incorporate vendor recommendations, allowed the HPCI system's speed control system to degrade without being detected until an actual failure of the HPCI system occurred during an October 14 sudden shutdown of the reactor. The agency considers the issue to have low to moderate risk because the HPCI system is an important mitigating system during a loss-of-offsite power event, and it is likely the system would not have been able to perform its intended function during a period greater than 30 days.

The purpose of the regulatory conference is to discuss the concern about inadequate testing of the HPCI system and its causes, the proposed "white" categorization and the apparent violation. NYPA will be provided with an opportunity to clarify aspects of the NRC inspection report, as necessary, and to outline its proposed corrective action.

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