



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION I

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No. I-02-046

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June 26, 2002

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NRC ISSUES FINDING OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE AT BEAVER VALLEY POWER STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff issued its final determination for an inspection finding at the Beaver Valley nuclear power plant in Shippingport, Pa. The NRC determined the finding should be characterized as "white," meaning it is an issue of low to moderate importance to safety. The two-reactor plant is operated by FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Company.

At Beaver Valley, the alert and notification system (ANS), which would be used to notify the public of an emergency at the plant, is made up of two types of devices: pole-mounted sirens and personal home alerting devices (PHADs). During an August inspection, NRC inspectors determined that FirstEnergy could not provide early notification to the entire population living within the 10-mile-radius emergency planning zone (EPZ). That's because a majority of the PHADs, which make up a small portion of the ANS, had not been adequately maintained and tested to ensure they would fulfill their design function of alerting members of the public in the Beaver Valley EPZ who might not hear the pole-mounted sirens.

Under its safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with "green" and progressing to "white," "yellow" or "red."

In an inspection report dated April 12, the NRC characterized the finding as "yellow," meaning it is an issue of substantial importance to safety. The letter forwarding that characterization offered the company the opportunity to meet with the NRC at a regulatory conference to discuss FirstEnergy's assessment of the issue. At the conference, FirstEnergy contended that essentially 100 percent of the ANS was functional and the impact on public health and safety was very low. Specifically, the company had conducted siren tests near PHAD locations and found that the sirens would provide the means for early notification in 75 percent of the areas where PHADs were located and, therefore, less than one percent of the population was potentially affected by PHAD deficiencies.

After considering the information developed during the inspection and the information provided by FirstEnergy at the regulatory conference, the NRC concluded that the inspection finding is more appropriately characterized as "white," because the majority of the public would be notified

directly by the sirens and functioning PHADs and the rest would likely be alerted by informal alerting such as television, radio, or “word of mouth.”

FirstEnergy has taken corrective actions to address this finding, including installation and testing of additional sirens to eliminate the need for PHADs.

FirstEnergy has 30 days to contest the NRC’s significance determination.

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