



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
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NRC CITES COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION FOR FINDING OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued its final determination that a May inspection finding at Columbia Generating Station is of low to moderate safety significance and will be characterized as “white.” The nuclear plant, near Richland, Wash., is operated by Energy Northwest.

During a refueling outage that ended in June 2001 Energy Northwest installed 16 new safety-related and six important-to-safety electrical circuit breakers. After the replacement, a part in the breakers called a mechanism-operated cell switch, failed or malfunctioned, which affected the operation of equipment on four occasions between June 2001 and February this year. Analysis of the failures determined that Energy Northwest had not incorporated the manufacturer’s maintenance requirements to lubricate the cell switch in its maintenance procedures.

The NRC evaluates regulatory performance at commercial nuclear power plants with a color coded significance determination process which classifies regulatory findings as being in one of four color categories: green, white, yellow, or red in increasing order of regulatory safety significance.

In addition to a white inspection finding, the NRC has issued a Notice of Violation to Energy Northwest for failing to verify the design adequacy of the new equipment and to promptly correct the breaker failures and malfunctions. Energy Northwest will be required to submit a written statement within 30 days explaining the reason for the violation and corrective actions taken.

The white finding may require additional NRC inspection at Columbia Generating Station.

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