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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT CATAWBA NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission Region II office in Atlanta began an inspection this week at the Catawba nuclear power plant, operated by Duke Energy near York, S.C., to look into several issues involving water flowing into below-grade electrical penetrations.

Water from the Catawba plant's Unit 2 cooling towers flowed into a diesel generator room in May and plant employees determined that other electrical conduits and penetrations had degraded seals. During a heavy rainstorm in late August, water entered the turbine building through unsealed electrical penetrations and that rainwater accumulated around some electrical transformers. Duke Energy initiated corrective actions for degraded penetration seals and entered the issues into the company's corrective action program.

An NRC inspection in early November determined that the Standby Shutdown facility was also susceptible to flooding from two possible sources.

The special inspection will review the facts surrounding the degraded seals in some areas and the lack of seals in others, determine if there are any generic issues for other nuclear plants, and assess the company's overall response and investigation including areas of the plant where the lack of watertight seals or degradation might be an issue.

The NRC will document its findings and conclusions in a report to be issued within 30 days of the inspection.

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