



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL OVERSIGHT TO SAN ONOFRE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station will receive additional oversight from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a result of a “white” inspection finding related to problems with an emergency battery used for supplying power to plant safety systems. The plant, operated by Southern California Edison Co., is located near San Clemente, Ca.

NRC inspectors found that the battery used to supply power to plant safety systems under some accident conditions, was inoperable between 2004 and 2008 because of loose electrical connections caused by inadequate maintenance instructions. The problem was discovered on March 25 during testing, prompting the NRC to conduct a special inspection.

“The problem stemmed from inadequate maintenance procedures,” said Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. “The problem was promptly corrected, but is troubling because the condition persisted for so long.”

Other emergency batteries were available to supply power to plant safety systems if called upon to do so, but the loss of one emergency battery reduced the plant’s safety margins.

The NRC uses a color coded system to categorize inspection findings and performance indicators, which are objective measures of plant performance. The colors range from “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” and “red,” depending on the safety significance of the issue. In this case, the NRC determined that the inspection finding was of “white,” or low to moderate safety significance.

The report also discusses seven findings that were determined to be of very low safety significance. “Of concern is that these findings were identified by the NRC following your review of the events prior to our announced special inspection indicating your evaluations lacked

the rigor necessary to identify these performance deficiencies,” the report states. “Your ability to effectively evaluate problems has been, and continues to be, a concern to the NRC.”

This concern was documented in the past two NRC assessment letters issued on March 3 and Sept. 2, and in another recently completed inspection that focused on problem identification and resolution. The NRC plans to continue to focus inspections in this area until sustained improvements are recognized.

Both NRC inspection reports will be available on the agency’s online document library at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>.

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