



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Telephone: 301/415-8200

Washington, D.C. 20555-0001

E-mail: opa_resource@nrc.gov Site: www.nrc.gov

Blog: <http://public-blog.nrc-gateway.gov>

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NRC CONTINUES TO TRACK EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMI ISSUES

Senior officials at U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission headquarters in Rockville, Md., are following events related to the Japanese earthquake and subsequent tsunami. In addition, the agency's regional office in Arlington, Texas, will continue to monitor the Diablo Canyon Power Plant's handling of a notice of unusual event (NOUE) at the site, near San Luis Obispo, Calif., for the duration of the event.

"We offer our condolences to all those in Japan affected by these tragedies," said NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko. "The NRC is ready to provide whatever assistance we can to our Japanese counterparts, should there be a specific request. We're closely coordinating with other federal agencies."

Friday's tsunami warning, issued after an estimated 8.9 magnitude earthquake occurred off the eastern Japanese coast, prompted Pacific Gas and Electric Co. (PG&E), operator of the Diablo Canyon two-reactor plant, to declare a precautionary NOUE at 4:23 a.m. EST Friday. PG&E has reported both reactors have remained online throughout the event. While PG&E has reported only minor tsunami-related effects, the plant is well-protected against tsunami conditions as required by NRC regulations. NRC staff at the plant are keeping track of the plant's response during the event and remain in close contact with plant operators.

Nuclear power plants are built to withstand environmental hazards, including earthquakes and tsunamis. Even those plants that are located outside of areas with extensive seismic activity are designed for safety in the event of such a natural disaster. The NRC requires that safety-significant structures, systems, and components be designed to take into account the most severe natural phenomena historically reported for the site and surrounding area.

In addition to the Diablo Canyon plant, the NRC is following events at the San Onofre nuclear power plant, the Humboldt Bay spent fuel storage site and NRC-regulated nuclear materials sites in Hawaii and Alaska to name a few. Personnel at all those sites have informed the NRC conditions remain safe.

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