



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC CONTINUES EXAMINATION OF EMERGENCY PROCEDURES AT U.S. NUCLEAR PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission today issued [inspection results](#) for the 104 operating U.S. nuclear power reactors, regarding their guidelines for continuing to protect the public even if accidents were to damage their reactor cores.

“While overall we believe plants are safe and all of the NRC’s efforts aim to ensure the plants never need to use these guidelines, we are concerned that our inspectors found many of the plants have work to do in either training their staff on these procedures or ensuring the guidelines are appropriately updated,” said Eric Leeds, director of the NRC’s Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

The NRC carried out the Severe Accident Management Guideline (SAMG) inspections at the request of the agency task force examining the lessons to be learned from the March 11 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, and the resulting damage to the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The NRC directed its resident inspectors at every U.S. nuclear power plant to examine the plants’ SAMGs, which are meant to contain or reduce the impact of accidents that damage a reactor core. All plants put these guidelines in place voluntarily in the late 1990s.

The resident inspectors examined where the plants keep the SAMGs, how the guidelines are updated and how the plants train their personnel to carry out the guidelines. The inspectors found that all plants have implemented the guidelines, with 97 percent of the plants keeping SAMG documents in their Technical Support Center, generally considered the best location for properly implementing the guidelines. The inspectors found SAMGs in 89 percent of plant control rooms, and in 71 percent of plant Emergency Operations Facilities. Only 42 percent of the plants, however, presently include SAMGs in their periodic review/revision procedures. The inspectors found that staff at 92 percent of the plants received initial training on SAMGs. When examining how the plants exercise carrying out SAMGs, the inspectors found only 61 percent of the plants periodically include the guidelines in their emergency drills.

The NRC’s task force will incorporate the SAMG inspection results into its short-term review to help determine if any immediate changes to NRC requirements are called for in light of events at Fukushima. The inspection results will also help inform the NRC’s long-term review of possible revisions to agency licensing and oversight processes.

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