



NRC NEWS

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT BRUNSWICK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will launch a special inspection at Progress Energy's Brunswick nuclear power plant to assess the circumstances surrounding an event on Wednesday that required operators to shut down the Unit 2 reactor.

The plant is located in Southport, N.C., about 20 miles south of Wilmington.

Unit 2 was restarting after a maintenance outage when operators identified unacceptable reactor coolant system leakage. The unit, which had reached 7 percent power, was manually scrammed, or shut down. Plant officials declared an Unusual Event, the lowest of four NRC emergency classifications.

The leak rate slowed as the pressure was decreased and the Unusual Event was terminated after about five hours. During preliminary leak investigation activities, plant employees determined that the reactor pressure vessel head had not been fully tensioned.

“While there were no immediate significant adverse implications to public health and safety, this event raises important questions that need to be addressed,” said Victor McCree, Region II Administrator. “Our resident inspectors and our Special Inspection Team will work diligently to understand what has occurred at Brunswick and why.”

The NRC's resident inspectors at Brunswick immediately began assessing the incident, and are continuing to monitor the licensee's activities. They will be supplemented on Monday by a Special Inspection Team from the NRC's Region II offices in Atlanta. The team will be composed of NRC inspectors with expertise in this area. The team will, among other things, develop a timeline, review Progress' actions leading up to the event and evaluate the company's response.

The on-site portion of the inspection will take several days. A report documenting the results should be issued within 45 days of the completion of the inspection.

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