



NRC NEWS

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NRC PLANS ADDITIONAL INSPECTION AT COOPER DUE TO FAILURE TO CORRECT EXERCISE ERRORS

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will increase inspection activity at Cooper Nuclear Station, a nuclear power plant near Brownville, Nebraska, in response to errors made during an emergency exercise that were not corrected. The NRC concluded that the issue was of low to moderate safety significance and thus constituted a “white” finding under the agency’s new reactor oversight process, and issued a Notice of Violation.

During an exercise of emergency procedures in August last year, simulated radiation exposure to the public was calculated incorrectly. As a result, incorrect protective actions were recommended to state and local authorities during the exercise. Although Nebraska Public Power District, which operates the Cooper plant, tried to fix the problem through revised procedures and personnel training, the same errors were repeated during a drill in April. NRC regulations require that identified weaknesses be corrected, which an NRC inspection ending in June concluded NPPD had failed to do. NPPD did not contest the proposed NRC action and declined a regulatory conference on the issue.

Under the NRC’s performance assessment process, the safety significance of each NRC inspection finding is characterized by a color -- green, white, yellow, or red. The agency response to the inspection findings is based on the significance of the items. A green finding receives normal NRC oversight, while white, yellow, or red assessments result in increasing NRC involvement, including additional inspections.

NPPD has 30 days to respond to the Notice of Violation with planned corrective actions. The increased level of NRC inspection during the coming year will focus on problem identification and resolution in the emergency preparedness program at Cooper. Cooper’s safety performance and applicable inspection reports can be viewed on the NRC’s website at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/CNS/cns_chart.html .

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