



NRC NEWS

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NRC CITES CLINTON PLANT FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS VIOLATION OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has determined that a violation of NRC emergency preparedness regulations at the Clinton Nuclear Power Station near Clinton, Illinois, should be characterized as "white," meaning that it is an issue of low to moderate importance to safety. The plant is operated by Exelon Nuclear Generating Co.

During an inspection in May and June of this year, NRC inspectors found that the company had failed to promptly correct deficiencies in the performance of control room communicators during drills in late 1999 and in August of last year. The role of the communicators is to provide information to offsite governmental agencies during a possible emergency.

Eleven members of the plant staff failed to meet the drill requirements in 1999, and ten failed to meet the requirements in 2000, including three who had failed in the previous year.

Under its safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with green and progressing to white, yellow or red.

A preliminary "white" finding was described in an inspection report issued June 29 of this year. The letter transmitting the report provided the company with an opportunity to either request a regulatory conference to discuss this issue or to respond in writing. Exelon sent a written response, indicating the company did not contest the characterization of the safety significance of this finding.

In February of this year, Exelon determined that it had not taken sufficient action to address the previous drill failures. The workers were retrained and retested. All but three successfully demonstrated they could make the required notifications. Those three were removed from the emergency response organization. These actions were reviewed during the NRC's inspection.

The company has increased the depth of its training program and increased the frequency to semiannual training to preclude future drill failures. and the company revised its notification procedures.

A white finding may result in future NRC inspections, but sufficient information was gathered in the June inspection at the Clinton plant to determine that the corrective actions were effective. The

performance of the control room communicators will be reviewed in future emergency preparedness inspections.

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