



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS -- REGION I

475 Allendale Road
King of Prussia, PA 19406

No. I-02-067

CONTACT: Diane Screnci, (610) 337-5330
Neil A. Sheehan, (610) 337-5331

November 27, 2002

E-mail: opa1@nrc.gov

NRC ISSUES FINAL SIGNIFICANCE DETERMINATION FOR TWO EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FINDINGS AT PEACH BOTTOM

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a final significance determination for two emergency preparedness findings at the Peach Bottom Atomic Power Station in Delta, PA. One of the findings has been characterized as "white," while the other is "green."

The plant is operated by Exelon Generation Company.

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."

On July 19, the NRC issued an inspection report detailing two findings - preliminarily characterized as white - and offering the company the opportunity to meet with the agency to discuss the findings. Exelon requested the meeting, which was held on August 23. The first finding, which was preliminarily characterized as "white" -- an issue of low to moderate safety significance -- is associated with Exelon's inadequate critique of a February emergency preparedness exercise.

The second finding, also preliminarily characterized as "white," stems from a delay in making an "Alert" classification during an actual event in June. (The NRC uses several classifications for significant events at nuclear power plants, ranging from the least significant category of "Unusual Event," increasing to "Alert," "Site Area Emergency" and "General Emergency," the most significant.) On June 2, the carbon-dioxide fire-suppression system for one of the emergency diesel generator rooms unexpectedly discharged, an event requiring the declaration of an Alert because the diesel room was uninhabitable. Although the company declared the alert in 31 minutes, there was an unnecessary delay due in part to a lapse, for several minutes, in the shift crew's use of their event classification procedures.

In both cases, the company argued that the findings should have been characterized as green.

The NRC has considered the information presented by Exelon at the August regulatory conference and information gathered during the inspection. With respect to the first finding, the NRC has determined it should be characterized as green.

With respect to the second finding, the NRC maintains it was appropriately characterized as white. In addition, Exelon was issued a notice of violation for the delay in declaring the alert. These findings did not affect Exelon's ability to appropriately respond to the emergency situation and protect public health and safety.

"White" inspection findings result in additional NRC inspections.

Exelon has 10 days to contest the significance determination and 30 days to respond to the notice of violation.

###