



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. I-04-046

Contact: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

October 14, 2004

Email: opa1@nrc.gov

NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection into the rupture of an 8-inch drain line that led to a manual shutdown of the Hope Creek nuclear power plant on October 10. The inspection got under way today at the plant, which is located in Hancock Bridge (Salem County), N.J., and operated by Public Service Electric & Gas (PSEG).

There are five full-time and three part-time members on the NRC inspection team, which will be tasked with evaluating the circumstances surrounding the Oct. 10 event. The review will include an assessment of whether the steam pipe failure could have been prevented and an independent evaluation of equipment and human-performance issues that complicated the shutdown. In addition, the inspection will assess the adequacy of PSEG's root-cause evaluation of the event and its plans for corrective actions.

Between about 6 p.m. and 6:14 p.m. on Oct. 10, the plant's operators reduced power and then manually shut down the reactor in response to indications of a steam leak in the turbine building. The leak was isolated shortly thereafter when the operators shut the main steam valves. While subsequently cooling down the plant, the operators experienced difficulties in efforts to maintain appropriate reactor vessel water levels. However, the plant maintained adequate safety margins throughout the event, backup safety equipment was available if needed, and the shutdown was successfully carried out. A small release of radioactivity occurred, but it was well below allowable federal limits.

The team will document its findings and conclusions in a report to be issued within 45 days after an exit meeting with the utility at the inspection's conclusion.

###