



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Region III

2443 Warrenville Road

Lisle IL 60532

No. III-08-001

Contacts:

Viktoriya Mitlyng 630-829-9662

Prema Chandrathil 630-829-9663

January 21, 2008

E-Mail: opa3@nrc.gov

Web site: www.nrc.gov

NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION OF ELECTRICAL PROBLEMS AT THE POINT BEACH NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has begun a special inspection at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Station to look into electrical problems at Unit 1 that led the station to declare an Unusual Event.

The plant, owned by FPL Energy, is located near Two Rivers, Wisc.

On Jan. 15, one electrical transformer used by Unit 1 failed, causing a loss of offsite power to vital electrical equipment called buses. These buses supply electricity to important safety equipment that would be needed to mitigate the consequences of an accident.

These electrical problems led the plant to declare an Unusual Event, the lowest level of emergency in the NRC's emergency classification system.

The electrical problems did not impact normal plant operations. Both units remained at full power during the event. The station's emergency diesel generators started and provided back-up power.

As was required by the plant's technical specifications, the utility shut down Unit 1. After the unit's safe shut down, the Unusual Event was terminated.

The plant was in a stable condition throughout the event. There was no risk to public safety at any time.

The NRC staffed the Region III Incident Response Center to monitor the event. NRC staff at the plant and in the Region III office monitored the situation around the clock, from the declaration of the Unusual Event on the afternoon of Jan. 15 through the evening of Jan. 16, when the event was terminated.

Both units of the point Beach plant remain in a stable condition. Unit 1 will remain shut down until the electrical problems are repaired. Unit 2 is operating at full power. The utility formed a special team to investigate the cause of the incident, develop corrective actions and repair problems.

"Even though the plant operated safely during the Unusual Event and is now in a stable condition, the NRC decided to dispatch a special inspection team to Point Beach," said James Caldwell, NRC's Regional Administrator. "We need to make sure we understand what led to the electrical problems at the plant. We also need to have confidence that the utility gains a full understanding of what happened and what needs to be done to prevent recurrence of such electrical problems."

The special inspection will evaluate the circumstances of the Jan, 15 event, the utility's past responses to related issues, the utility's organizational response to the event, the root cause evaluation, the proposed corrective actions and repairs.

The special inspection will continue until the inspection goals are achieved.

The special inspection team will issue its report about 30-45 days after the completion of the inspection. The report will be available from the Region III Office of Public Affairs and in the agency's online document library at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>.

#####