



NRC NEWS

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NRC ISSUES “WHITE” FINDING TO PEACH BOTTOM NUCLEAR PLANT FOR SECURITY OFFICER INATTENTIVENESS AND RELATED ISSUE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will further increase its level of oversight at the Peach Bottom nuclear power plant after finalizing a “white” inspection finding for instances of inattentiveness on the part of multiple security officers as well as an ineffective behavioral observation program at the facility. Exelon owns and operates the plant, which is located in Delta (York County), Pa.

Under the NRC’s Reactor Oversight Process, inspection findings are classified by color based on their safety significance. The colors range from “green,” for a very low safety issue, to “red,” for a high safety issue. A “white” finding represents an issue of low to moderate safety significance.

“By virtue of this action, the NRC has completed its determination of the significance of the finding,” NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. “However, that does not mean we are done with our reviews of the plant’s security program. Indeed, this ‘white’ finding means we will continue to engage Exelon on its work toward addressing any security program deficiencies in a timely and comprehensive manner.”

In September 2007, the NRC was made aware of video recordings of Peach Bottom security officers who appeared to be inattentive while on duty. In response, the NRC dispatched a team of five inspectors to the plant to review the matter. The Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) review was concluded on Sept. 28.

The NRC reported at an Oct. 9th public meeting that the inspectors had confirmed there had been multiple security officers who were inattentive on multiple occasions in a “ready room,” a room where officers not on patrol or on watch are allowed to read, study, eat or relax but must remain ready to respond. In addition, the inspectors found that Exelon and Wackenhut, which was then the plant’s contract security provider but has since been replaced by an in-house security force, missed opportunities to identify such behavior via the behavioral observation

program. Nevertheless, the inspectors concluded that because of overlapping security measures, security at the plant was not significantly degraded, and that Exelon had taken prompt action to address inattentiveness issues once they were brought to light.

A follow-up NRC team inspection was performed the week of Nov. 5 to assess Exelon's root cause analysis of the inattentiveness issues and determine if the company's corrective actions were sufficient to prevent a recurrence. During a public meeting on Dec. 3, the team reported that it had identified a potentially "greater than green" inspection finding involving the inattentiveness by plant security officers, which reflected shortcomings in the facility's behavior observation program. At the Dec. 3rd meeting, the NRC staff stated that the final significance determination for the finding would come at a later date.

The NRC offered Exelon the opportunity to take part in a Regulatory Conference, at which additional details on an issue can be brought forward, or to respond in writing to the proposed action. In a Jan. 7 communication, the company informed the NRC it would not contest the characterization of the inspection finding.

With the issuance of the letter today, the NRC staff has finalized its significance determination for the finding by characterizing it as "white." This finding will result in additional NRC oversight activities at the site, above and beyond extra NRC inspections already being devoted to Peach Bottom in response to the issues involving the security program. These activities will include a supplemental team inspection. On Nov. 28, the agency's Executive Director for Operations, Luis Reyes, approved additional NRC oversight to assess Peach Bottom security performance.

Exelon has implemented a number of corrective actions to address the Peach Bottom security program concerns. These actions have been reviewed by the NRC and found to be reasonable. The NRC will conduct follow-up inspections to verify the effectiveness of these actions.

NRC reviews regarding the plant's security program are continuing. Enforcement may be taken when those reviews are completed.

The company will have 30 days to appeal the "white" inspection finding.

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