



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC CONDUCTING SPECIAL INSPECTION AT COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission is conducting a special inspection at the Columbia Generating Station in response to an Aug. 5 electrical fire that resulted in the shutdown of the reactor. The plant, located near Richland, Wash., is operated by Energy Northwest.

A fire in the plant's turbine building resulted in a protective automatic turbine trip and subsequent reactor shutdown, prompting the licensee to declare an Unusual Event – the lowest of four categories of nuclear emergencies.

Plant systems responded as expected. The licensee and the NRC are continuing to evaluate the sequence of events following the shutdown.

“We’re taking a closer look at what may have caused the fire and how plant systems responded,” said NRC Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. “We’ll also be evaluating the sequence of events following the shutdown. Although this incident resulted in no danger to public health or safety, it’s important that we understand why it happened in the first place and how a similar occurrence can be avoided in the future.”

A two-person team of NRC inspectors will develop a chronology of the event, review the licensee’s root cause determination, and evaluate the licensee’s maintenance and testing program and the effectiveness of operators’ response to the event.

The inspection will begin today and is expected to take several days. The team will write a report about 30-45 days after completion of the inspection. The report will be available on the agency’s online document library at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>.

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