



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC ISSUES YELLOW AND WHITE INSPECTION FINDINGS TO OCONEE NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has made a final determination on two inspection findings at the Oconee nuclear power plant related to the plant's standby shutdown systems, which are intended for use when normal and emergency systems are inoperable.

One violation is "yellow," meaning the issue has substantial safety significance and the other is "white," indicating an issue of low to moderate safety significance. The findings will result in additional NRC inspections and potentially other NRC actions. The three-unit Oconee plant, operated by Duke Energy, is located near Seneca, S.C., 30 miles west of Greenville.

The NRC staff identified three apparent violations related to issues with the standby shutdown system and a conference with Duke Energy was held July 13. During that meeting, Duke Energy described its assessment of the significance of the findings, its root cause evaluations and corrective actions it has taken. Duke Energy also offered its view that the two violations involving the failures to identify and correct standby shutdown facility problems and ensure the system remained operable were similar and should be combined.

After considering the conference information, and additional data supplied after the conference, the NRC staff concluded that there were two violations and the finding involving the failure to ensure the standby shutdown systems remained operable was determined to be "yellow." The other finding, related to a failure to identify and correct degradation in the standby shutdown systems of Units 2 and 3 after the problem was identified in Unit 1, was determined to be "white."

Under the NRC reactor oversight process, an inspection finding is evaluated using a significance determination process and assigned a color indicating its safety significance. Findings with very low safety significance are labeled "green." "White" findings have low to moderate safety significance, "yellow" findings have substantial safety significance, and "red" findings have high safety significance.

A third violation involving materially inaccurate information being provided to the NRC regarding Oconee's standby shutdown facility action plan was determined to be a Severity Level III violation under NRC policies. It would have warranted a civil penalty, but since Oconee has not been the subject of recent escalated enforcement action and the plant staff has taken corrective actions, the NRC will not levy a fine for that violation.

"Ensuring that all safety systems are properly maintained and ready to be used if needed must be a high priority for all nuclear plants," said NRC Region II Administrator Luis Reyes. "We expect all NRC licensees to meet our regulations and their own technical specifications."

The NRC staff will determine the most appropriate regulatory response and will notify Duke Energy later of any additional inspections, meetings or other activities the agency may plan. Duke Energy has 30 days to respond to the NRC's letter detailing the findings.

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