



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC FINDS PROBLEMS OF SUBSTANTIAL SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE WITH FORT CALHOUN NUCLEAR PLANT'S FLOOD PROTECTION

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a violation of substantial safety significance because of inadequacies in the Fort Calhoun nuclear plant's flood protection strategy. The plant is located near Omaha, Neb.

NRC officials identified a violation of regulatory requirements during an inspection conducted at the plant earlier this year. Inspectors reported that the licensee's flood protection strategy may not have been fully effective during worst-case Missouri River flooding scenarios. The strategy called for workers to install floodgates in front of doors of the plant's auxiliary building and intake structure and pile sandbags on them.

The licensee had a stockpile of empty sandbags, but did not have all the sand on site necessary to fill them. In addition, their strategy for buttressing floodgates may not have been effective.

As a result of the inspection, Omaha Public Power District (OPPD) officials made changes to their strategy to protect the plant from severe flooding. The licensee has established a stockpile of thousands of filled sandbags ready for immediate use and made other changes to their flood plan to make it more effective.

"This violation is of substantial safety significance because their strategy for protecting the plant against severe flooding was inadequate," said Region IV Administrator Elmo E. Collins. "It's very unlikely the site would ever face the kind of flood this plan was designed for, but they are required to be prepared for the absolute worst, just in case."

The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," as the safety significance of the issue increases. The NRC's preliminary evaluation determined that the violation was "yellow," meaning it had substantial safety significance.

A regulatory conference was held with OPPD officials on Aug. 18, during which they described their assessment of the significance of the inspection finding, presented additional information and described corrective actions taken.

After additional consideration, the NRC has determined that the violation was appropriately assessed as “yellow.” Yellow findings normally result in additional NRC inspections and meetings with the licensee.

OPPD has 30 days to accept the Notice of Violation or contest it.

The NRC’s letter, its enclosures and the licensee’s response will be made available to the public through the agency’s electronic reading room at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-room/adams/html>. Help in assessing these documents is available from the NRC Public Document Room by calling 1-800-397-4209.

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