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## NRC Issues White Finding to Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has determined that an inspection finding involving emergency plan evacuations for areas over the ocean at Diablo Canyon is of low to moderate safety significance. A severity level III violation was also issued. The plant, operated by Pacific Gas & Electric Co. (PG&E), is located near San Luis Obispo, Calif.

“Changes were made to the emergency plan implementing procedures that reduced the plan’s effectiveness,” NRC Region IV Administrator Marc Dapas said. “The requirement to provide protective action recommendations for the 10-mile emergency planning zone, regardless of whether that zone includes areas of water, is clear. PG&E should have recognized that the changes were not in compliance with those standards and required prior NRC approval.”

The licensee has taken action to fully resolve this issue. Licensees recommend protective actions to local and state officials, who then make the actual decision about what protective actions the public should take. In this case, the county had procedures in place that included evaluating the ocean for evacuation. So, despite the gap in PG&E’s emergency plan implementing procedures, at no time was the public going to be allowed to stay in an area that had the potential for radioactivity if an event had occurred.

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, commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved. The agency’s enforcement system uses four severity levels, with level I being the most serious. NRC held a regulatory conference with PG&E officials on Jan. 14 and after thoroughly considering the information provided by the licensee, as well as NRC’s inspection results, determined that the finding has low to moderate safety significance, or is “white.”

NRC inspectors [identified](#) that the licensee’s emergency plan did not include a measure to recommend evacuation of the public for areas over the ocean within the 10-mile emergency planning zone. Upon further review, the inspectors determined that the licensee had changed its procedure without prior NRC approval as is required if a change decreases the effectiveness of those plans. In this case, PG&E did not identify the change as a decrease in effectiveness and therefore did not request NRC approval.

The NRC will determine the appropriate level of agency oversight and notify PG&E officials of that decision in a separate letter.