



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF CLOSES CONFIRMATORY ACTION LETTER ON ACTIONS TAKEN BY D.C. COOK PLANT ON 1997 INSPECTION FINDINGS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has informed American Electric Power Company that the utility has fulfilled its commitments in correcting certain design issues at the D. C. Cook Nuclear Power Station which resulted in the plant being shut down in 1997. The two-unit plant is located near Bridgman, Michigan.

The commitments were detailed in a Confirmatory Action Letter issued to the company by the NRC. Closing the Confirmatory Action Letter is one step in the process leading to restart of the plant. The NRC is continuing its review of other corrective actions and improvements at D. C. Cook.

A final inspection, examining the plant's readiness to resume operations, will take place before the NRC agrees that the first unit, Unit 2, is ready to restart. The second unit, Unit 1, will receive similar scrutiny before it resumes operation several months later. These inspections will take place when the company completes the ongoing work necessary for restart.

After an NRC design inspection questioned the capabilities of key plant emergency systems to meet their design requirements, the company shut down both nuclear reactors at the plant in September 1997. Both units remain shut down.

The design issues, raised during the inspection, included how plant emergency systems would respond to a reactor accident involving a pipe break or other loss of reactor cooling water. In addition to the design issues, NRC inspectors found that fibrous material, present in the reactor containment structures, could impair the operation of the system recirculating water to the reactor in the event of an accident.

Other inspection findings involved changes in emergency operating procedures to response to an accident, changes in testing procedures for certain valves, and how measurement uncertainties were considered in safety procedures and analyses.

The Confirmatory Action Letter dealt with the issues found at the time of the design inspection. Subsequently, significant problems were found by the NRC staff and by the company in the plant's ice condenser systems. The ice condensers are intended to reduce pressure in the reactor containment

following an accident. Additional issues were raised as a result of NRC and company reviews of other plant safety systems which continued through 1998 and into 1999.

The company prepared a comprehensive plan to review and evaluate all plant safety systems and take necessary corrective actions. The NRC developed a check list of those items necessary for the plant to start up and operate safely, based on the utility's plan and NRC inspection findings. The NRC has been conducting inspections of those check list items to assure that the company has adequately corrected the problems which were found.

The letter to the company, closing the Confirmatory Action Letter, and other documents, including inspection reports, are available on the NRC's web site at:
<<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/reports/cook.htm>>.

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