



NRC NEWS

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NRC SENDS SPECIAL INSPECTION TEAM TO WESTINGHOUSE FUEL FABRICATION FACILITY IN COLUMBIA, S.C.

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has sent a special inspection team to Westinghouse's fuel fabrication facility in Columbia, South Carolina, to inspect the circumstances surrounding the failure of several valves to close to a fail-safe position. The valves control the flow of uranium hexafluoride gas and water in the process steps which convert this gas into solid uranium dioxide, which is used to make fuel pellets. After the failure was identified, the system was shut down and corrective action initiated. There were no releases of nuclear materials into the environment or inside the facility. The facility is currently being maintained in a safe condition.

The agency routinely sends inspectors to facilities that experience an unusual failure of safety equipment in order to understand the malfunction fully. In this case, the NRC already had a safety inspection at the site at the time the event occurred. Following the event, as the NRC and the licensee learned more about the malfunction, the agency sent a team of three additional inspectors with various fields of expertise to supplement the ongoing inspection. They will evaluate the efforts of Westinghouse to determine the cause of the malfunction and will assess the actions to correct the problem. Their inspection should last several days.

The NRC team will issue a written report, which will be available to the public, within 30 days after completion of the inspection.

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