



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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NRC CITES OCONEE NUCLEAR PLANT FOR VIOLATION OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has determined that a violation of NRC safety regulations at Unit 1 of the Duke Energy's Oconee nuclear power plant near Seneca, South Carolina, should be characterized as "white," meaning that it is of low to moderate importance to safety.

An NRC inspection in January, 2001, identified the fact that a lack of adequate procedural controls existed at Oconee Unit 1 to ensure closure of the containment building upon a possible loss of shutdown cooling capability during a refueling outage in the Fall of the year 2000.

No problem occurred, but the NRC said a procedure to combat a loss of shutdown cooling while the reactor was partially defueled was inadequate because it lacked sufficient instructions to ensure that operators would disconnect temporary services running through a temporary hatch cover and shut the outer emergency hatch door, instead of relying upon the non-qualified temporary cover for containment closure.

Under its safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with green and progressing to white, yellow or red.

The NRC staff informed Duke Energy in a letter dated August 1 that the agency's final significance determination was that the procedural control concerns at Oconee Unit 1 constituted a White finding and issued the company a Notice of Violation.

The NRC said procedural revisions and corrective actions taken by the company were adequate, and that the finding does not represent a current safety issue.

Additional details on the white finding and on the Notice of Violation are available from the NRC's Region 2 Office of Public Affairs at the above address or online in the NRC's electronic reading room in the agency's ADAMS document system, accessible at www.nrc.gov/reading-room/adams.html. Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC Public Document Room at 301- 415-4737 or 1-800-397-4209.

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