



NRC NEWS

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NRC SPECIAL INSPECTION BEGINS JULY 28 AT POINT BEACH

A special Nuclear Regulatory Commission inspection begins Monday, July 28, to review performance at the Point Beach Nuclear Plant and continues through September. The two-reactor facility, operated by the Nuclear Management Company, is near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

The special inspection results from the NRC's determination that the possible failure of an auxiliary cooling water system was of "high safety significance." Normal plant operations were not affected by the problem, which was initially discovered by plant personnel in 2001 and subsequently corrected. Another aspect of the inspection stems from problems with the utility's emergency preparedness program to deal with possible emergencies at the plant.

The inspection team will be headed by Anton Vogel, the NRC branch chief responsible for overseeing the inspection program for Point Beach. Because of the performance problems at Point Beach, the NRC's Region III Office has established a separate branch to monitor the plant.

The special inspection will have three focuses, each involving two weeks of onsite inspection: (1) the corrective action program - how the utility finds and corrects problems; (2) the emergency preparedness program - how the utility would respond to an emergency at the plant; and (3) a broad review of the plant's engineering, operations, and maintenance programs.

The corrective action inspection begins Monday, July 28; the emergency preparedness inspection will start August 4; and the engineering, operations, and maintenance inspection will be conducted during the weeks of September 8 and September 22.

The inspection team will discuss the progress of the inspection at a public meeting in late August in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. A second public meeting after the conclusion of the inspection is planned for mid-October. Dates, locations and other details of the meetings will be announced later.

The report of the team's findings will be publicly available from the Region III Office of Public Affairs and on the NRC's web site: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> - use Docket Number 05000266 to locate the document. The report is expected to be issued in November. Assistance in using the web reading room is available by calling the NRC Public Document Room at 800-397-4209.

Even though the utility discovered the problem with the auxiliary cooling water system, which led to the inspection, and took prompt action to address the problem, the special inspection is intended to look more broadly at principal aspects of plant operations to see if there are other performance problems. The NRC Reactor Oversight Process calls for such an inspection when there are problems of "high safety significance."

The auxiliary cooling water system is used to maintain the reactor in a safe condition if problems occur during plant operations and to continue removing heat from the reactor after a shutdown.

NRC inspection findings are evaluated using a four-level scale of safety significance, ranging from "green" for a finding of very low significance, through "white" and "yellow" to "red," for a finding of high safety significance. The 2001 auxiliary cooling water system problem was determined to be a "red" finding.

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