



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>

No. I-05-029

Contact: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

May 18, 2005

E-mail: opal@nrc.gov

NRC REPORTS PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF MILLSTONE 3 SPECIAL INSPECTION

An NRC special inspection team sent to the Millstone 3 nuclear power plant to review an April 17th shutdown has preliminarily concluded the event was caused by an apparent failure of a circuit card in a computerized reactor protection system. The team has also determined the unit was safely removed from service by operators, any radiological releases were well below regulatory limits and there were no public health and safety consequences. However, the team did identify several inspection findings.

NRC staff will present the preliminary results of the inspection this evening at a meeting of Connecticut's Nuclear Energy Advisory Council (NEAC). NEAC's meeting, which is open to the public for observation, is scheduled to get under way at 6 p.m. at Waterford Town Hall, 15 Rope Ferry Road in Waterford, Conn.

The Millstone 2 and 3 nuclear power plants are located in Waterford and operated by Dominion Resources.

On April 17, Millstone 3 experienced an automatic shutdown from full power. The event involved the activation of various safety subsystems. As the reactor was shutting down, main steam line safety valves opened to automatically remove heat generated after the reactor shutdown. One main steam line safety valve remained open for an extended period of time. It was this condition that resulted in the declaration of an "Alert" – the second-lowest of four levels of emergency classification.

In response to the event, the NRC sent a special inspection team to the facility on April 20 to evaluate the circumstances surrounding the shutdown with complications. Consisting of four full-time and four part-time inspectors, the team was a multi-disciplined group with diverse backgrounds.

The team has identified several findings, including issues involving the failure of a turbine-driven pump that is part of a system sometimes used to help cool down the plant, control-room indicator design issues, minor operator response issues, a delay in the activation of a computer program used to evaluate plant conditions and the adequacy of the company's boric acid control program. The NRC has preliminarily determined these findings to be "green."

The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear power 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 special inspection team has also noted that in response to the event, Dominion made a timely assessment of radiological conditions and has since launched a review of the shutdown by its own evaluation team, implemented multiple corrective actions and planned additional evaluations.

After presenting its preliminary findings this evening, the NRC special inspection team will document its findings and conclusions in a report to be issued within 45 days.

###