



NRC NEWS

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NRC Issues a “Yellow” Inspection Finding to Kewaunee Nuclear Plant for Failing to Promptly Evaluate Diesel Fuel Oil Leak

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has determined that the failure of the Kewaunee Nuclear Power Plant to promptly take corrective action for a diesel generator fuel leak in June 2006 was of “substantial importance to safety.” The plant, operated by Dominion Energy Kewaunee, Inc., is located near Kewaunee, Wis.

The NRC determined the incident to be a “yellow” finding, indicating it was of substantial importance to safety.

On June 28, 2006, plant personnel identified a leak on one of two emergency diesel generators at the plant but did not follow procedures to evaluate the condition under the plant’s correction action program. On Aug. 17, while performing a routine test of this diesel generator, plant workers saw a substantial increase in the fuel oil leaking from the connection between the fuel oil line tubing and a fitting. The testing was stopped and the diesel generator was declared inoperable. The leaking equipment was replaced, and the diesel generator was returned to service on Aug. 18.

The utility tested the defective equipment and concluded that the leaking fuel oil system components would have failed after four hours of diesel operation if the generator was required to supply power to plant safety systems. The test results led the utility to conclude that the emergency diesel generator was inoperable for 51 days.

NRC inspectors conducted an inspection to review the circumstances of the leak and reviewed the results of tests performed by the utility.

The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” or “red,” as the safety significance of the issue increases.

NRC inspectors identified one “yellow” finding of substantial importance to safety associated with the plant personnel’s failure to follow procedures which would have required plant personnel to evaluate how the leak would affect the diesel generator’s operability. This operability evaluation would have shown that, under certain accident conditions, the diesel would not be able to perform its safety function. It would have revealed the need to promptly fix the problem.

Emergency diesel generators supply electrical power to plant safety systems if the normal connection to off-site power sources is lost.

“This incident shows the importance of following procedures at nuclear power plants,” said James Caldwell, regional administrator for NRC’s Region III office in Lisle, Ill. “Even though routine plant operations were not affected by this issue, the utility’s failure to follow procedures could have resulted in the failure of one of the plant’s safety systems to fulfill its function in case of an accident. This resulted in an a reduction in plant safety margins.”

The utility’s corrective actions included replacing the leaking components and emphasizing to plant personnel the need to follow procedures on entering issues into the corrective action program.

“Yellow” findings normally result in additional NRC inspections and meetings with the utility. The NRC issued a Notice of Violation to Dominion Energy Kewaunee for plant personnel’s failure to follow procedures and enter the issue into the corrective action program. The company is required to respond to the Notice of Violation within 30 days, describing its corrective actions and steps it is taking to prevent a recurrence of the violation.

The letter notifying Dominion of the yellow finding is available from the NRC’s Region III Office of Public Affairs or and will be available in the NRC’s online document library at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> (use accession number ML070940146).

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