



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. I-12-033

Aug. 7, 2012

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NRC CITES SEABROOK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT FOR INSPECTION FINDING OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The Seabrook nuclear power plant will receive additional oversight from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission following the finalization of a “White” (low to moderate safety significance) inspection finding for the facility, which is located in Seabrook, N.H., and operated by NextEra Energy Seabrook, LLC.

The inspection finding stems from an emergency exercise conducted at the plant in April. All U.S. nuclear power plants are required to undergo a graded full-scale emergency exercise once every two years. During these exercises, the NRC assesses the company’s on-site emergency response capabilities, including the ability to evaluate and respond to a significant event, and to communicate what is going on to state, county and local authorities. Meanwhile, the Federal Emergency Management Agency assesses off-site response.

During the most recent emergency exercise for the Seabrook plant, on April 17, NextEra personnel did not develop and make proper initial protective action recommendations to the states, based on radiological conditions at the time, although their recommendations did become correct as the exercise scenario progressed. While some deficiencies can be expected in a challenging exercise scenario, the NRC requires plant operators to identify the issues, critique them and take appropriate corrective actions.

The “White” inspection finding has to do with the fact that during the company’s critique of the exercise, conducted on April 17-19, plant personnel failed to identify the error regarding the incorrect protective action recommendations. As the NRC inspection report on the exercise states, this represents a “performance deficiency that was reasonably within NextEra’s ability to foresee and prevent.” The report also states that, “Specifically, the failure of NextEra personnel to effectively identify an exercise weakness associated with a risk-significant planning standard caused a missed opportunity to identify and correct an exercise-related performance deficiency.”

Prior to the finalization of the inspection finding, the company was offered the opportunity to take part in a Regulatory Conference to present the NRC with additional information related to the finding, but it declined the opportunity. However, NextEra did submit

a written response on June 21, 2012, in which it did not contest the finding but did provide the results of a root cause analysis of the issue.

The NRC will perform a supplemental inspection at Seabrook to evaluate the company's root-cause evaluation of the problem identified during the emergency exercise and its corrective actions. NextEra will notify the agency once it is ready for that review.

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