



NRC NEWS

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NRC BEGINS SPECIAL INSPECTION AT OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT TO REVIEW ISSUES AT SITE DURING HURRICANE SANDY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has initiated a Special Inspection at the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant in response to issues that arose when Hurricane Sandy impacted the facility on Oct. 29 and 30. The inspection began today at the plant, which is located in Lacey Township (Ocean County), N.J., and operated by Exelon.

The team of three NRC inspectors is reviewing the circumstances surrounding the company's event declaration activities related to water level increases at the plant's water intake structure during the storm. The Special Inspection will expand on reviews conducted during and after the storm by the NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to Oyster Creek.

There were no actual impacts on the plant's, NRC's or state's emergency response posture. All three entities were monitoring the storm's arrival and potential impacts, with the emergency response facilities already staffed.

"Because the reactor was out of service at the time of the storm for a previously scheduled refueling and maintenance outage, plant operators did not have to contend with the possibility of a reactor shutdown as Sandy passed through the area. There were no immediate safety concerns," Region I Administrator Bill Dean said. "Nevertheless, there are certain observations involving procedures and on-site activities that surfaced during the event warranting a closer look. This Special Inspection will focus on those areas to gain a better understanding of how the intake water level information was monitored and communicated during the event."

As water rose in the plant's water intake structure on Oct. 29, operators declared an "Unusual Event" – the lowest of four levels of emergency classification used by the NRC – at 6:55 p.m. when the level topped 4.5 feet above mean sea level. Subsequently, at about 8:45 p.m., an "Alert" was declared when the water level was 6 feet above mean sea level at the structure. An Alert is the second-lowest level of emergency classification. The water level rose due to a combination of a rising tide, wind direction and storm surge.

Early on the morning of Oct. 30, the water level had declined to points at which the emergency declarations were terminated.

The NRC will issue a report on the results of the Special Inspection within 45 days of its completion.

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