



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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NRC CITES OCONEE NUCLEAR PLANT FOR VIOLATION OF LOW TO MODERATE SAFETY SIGNIFICANCE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has determined that a violation of NRC safety regulations at Unit 1 of the Duke Energy's Oconee nuclear power plant near Seneca, South Carolina, should be characterized as "white," meaning that it is of low to moderate importance to safety.

An NRC inspection completed on March 12 of this year identified a violation of NRC requirements. From approximately December of 1995 until April of 2001, a problem in the plant's High Pressure Service Water System was not promptly corrected following identification by the company.

The High Pressure Service Water System in the Unit 1 auxiliary building was filled and pressurized with water instead of being in a dry condition. The NRC said a rupture of the HPSW line in the auxiliary building would cause flooding and could disable safety equipment due to a lack of mitigation capabilities. The NRC said the HPSW system is constructed of metal, uses untreated lake water and has shown signs of corrosion.

Under its safety significance determination process, NRC officials classify certain conditions at nuclear power plants as being one of four colors which delineate increasing levels of safety significance, progressing from green to white to yellow to red.

The NRC staff in an inspection report dated April 30, 2001, documented the finding and assessed it under the significance determination process as a preliminary "white" issue. An open regulatory conference was conducted at Duke Energy Corporation's request on June 27 of this year, and Duke was notified of the agency's final significance determination in a letter dated July 26.

In addition to the "white" determination, the NRC issued a Notice of Violation to Duke for failing to take timely corrective action. NRC officials have concluded that recent corrective actions that have been taken and those planned to correct the violation and to prevent recurrence are adequate.

Additional details on the "white" finding are available in a letter and Notice of Violation from the NRC to Duke Energy dated July 26, 2002, which can be obtained from the NRC Region II public

affairs office at the above address, or from the NRC Public Electronic Reading Room on the agency's Internet Web Site at: www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html . Help in using the Public Reading Room is available by contacting the NRC Public Document Room at 301/415-4737 or 1/800/397-4209.

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