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NRC STAFF TO REVIEW APPARENT VIOLATION AT SEABROOK NUCLEAR PLANT

An apparent violation of Nuclear Regulatory Commission requirements at the Seabrook nuclear power plant in Seabrook, N.H., will be discussed by agency staff and plant managers on Tuesday, March 24. At issue is a failure to promptly and effectively address degraded equipment conditions at the facility, which is operated by the North Atlantic Energy Service Corporation.

The predecisional enforcement conference will begin at 10 a.m. in the Public Meeting Room at the NRC Region 1 Office in King of Prussia, Pa. It will be open to the public for observation.

During an inspection conducted from December 7 through January 31 at the plant, NRC inspectors identified four examples of a lack of prompt and effective repairs to equipment.

In two of the examples, there was a failure to maintain minimum operability requirements for the safety injection system and control room building air-conditioning system. The safety injection system, one of the plant's emergency core cooling systems, would be used to help keep the reactor core cooled and covered after a loss-of-coolant accident. The control room building air-conditioning system would be needed to keep the building habitable following an accident.

Another example involved the operation of the plant for more than a year with leakage from a portion of the residual heat removal system, another emergency core cooling system. The final example had to do with a degraded charging pump. The pump is used to help maintain the proper chemistry and reactivity in the reactor.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that the NRC has determined a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather,

the purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee with an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the licensee to outline its proposed corrective action.

No decision on the apparent violations will be made at this conference. That decision will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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