SHUTDOWN TO CONTINUE UNTIL FALL

Representatives Of CP&L, NRC Meet Today To Discuss Performance Improvement

As the shutdown of its Brunswick Nuclear Plant continues, representatives of Carolina Power and Light Co. will meet with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission in Atlanta today (Thursday) to discuss how the company plans to correct "continuing performance problems" at the plant.

"They will be discussing the status of the facility, what CP&L has determined its corrective action will be, how it plans to achieve those goals and when," said Ken Clark, spokesman for the NRC's southeastern regional office in Atlanta.

The plant was shut down in April after structural problems were found in its diesel generator building that could make it vulnerable to earthquake damage. The generators are needed to power pumps that circulate cooling water through the reactors.

Both units at the plant are expected to remain off line at least until early fall, a company spokesman said Tuesday. Besides correcting structural deficiencies noted by the NRC, the company is inspecting other areas of the plant for similar problems and catching up on a general backlog of maintenance work.

On May 27, CP&L was given 30 days to provide a written response to an NRC report that was highly critical of company management for its inability "to cause positive, lasting improvements" at the plant. The commission said it was "deeply concerned" that the root causes of continuing performance problems at the plant are similar to those identified by the NRC over the past 10 years.

The NRC has fined CP&L nine times since July 1988 for violating maintenance procedures at the plant.

CP&L plans to release a formal response to the NRC report Friday, according to company spokesman Elizabeth Bean. She said the meeting in Atlanta this week "was between their engineers and our engineers" and would not be a discussion of the underlying safety issues raised in the report.

During a six-week inspection completed May 1, the NRC found aging equipment, poor maintenance and ineffective work controls at the plant.

Approximately 200 structures and components at the plant were found to have inadequate safety margins for earthquake resistance. Many of these deficiencies were more than two years old, including bent, twisted and cracked supports and defective bolts in some building walls.

Inspectors in the emergency diesel generator building found bolt heads that had been cut off and welded to structures to give the appearance of bolts where none existed. Some bolts had been cut short, improperly reducing the threaded length. Others were installed in concrete without the required steel anchor sleeves.

Bean said CP&L inspectors recently found similar bolt problems in other areas in the plant, "though not in the amount or safety significance" of those in the generator building. Most of the new problems were in bolts that support equipment, not in structural fasteners, she said.

The company has also discovered that some of the structural steel at the plant was not installed as it was originally intended. Bean said the construction was different but not necessarily less effective than the intended design.

None of the design discrepancies were in the primary structure of the plant, which is constructed of reinforced concrete, Bean said.

The latest in-house inspection also found that some ventilation ducts in the main control building do not meet specifications for withstanding 300 mile-per-hour tornado winds.

Bean said these and other "inspections and fixits" were being addressed during the shutdown. No firm date has been set for restarting the plant.

No increase in rates is expected to come as a direct result of the current maintenance, Bean said. However an adjustment may be necessary in fall 1993 if the shutdown leads to significant purchases of power and fuel.

The NRC report said that while operator performance at the Brunswick Nuclear Plant has improved over the past two years, deficiencies continue to occur. Poor maintenance controls have resulted in several significant events in the past year, the report said.

In January1991 a technician was sprayed with radioactive water while opening an improperly installed valve.

Two months later the plant was shut down for more than a month when a worker failed to follow correct procedure when changing bearings on an emergency diesel generator.

On Jan. 6, one of the emergency generators failed to start because parts had not been lubricated after cleaning.

So far this year the inspectors found 14 examples of no supervision at the job site, 15 examples of inadequate procedures and 11 examples of failure to follow procedures. Since Sept. 1, 1991, there have been approximately 20 unscheduled shutdowns or reductions in power due to equipment failures.

The report says the problems at the nuclear plant begin at the top.

"Management has not set high standards for the material condition of the plant and has not provided the leadership needed for effective implementation of improvements," the report concludes. "Lack of critical self-assessment has resulted in the failure to recognize problems and the failure to implement effective corrective actions."

As some of the report's findings became public, CP&L on May 14 announced it would spend more than $200 million in an accelerated effort to improve operations and performance at the plant. The company said it did not plan to raise rates to pay for the improvements.

Company officials said a growing backlog of maintenance and modification work had handicapped its improvement efforts and "prevented the plant from realizing the full benefits of the initiatives that have been undertaken previously."

Among the improvements proposed by CP&L over the next five years are a new craft training facility, a refurbished water system and modifications to the condensate storage tank and pumping system.

The company also said it was investigating possible legal action against whomever installed the substandard bolts in the emergency diesel generator building.

Test Of Sirens Set For Brunswick And New Hanover

Residents of Brunswick and New Hanover counties who live within a 10-mile radius of Carolina Power & Light's Brunswick nuclear plant may hear sirens July 7,8 and 9.

CP&L will be conducting routine quarterly low volume "growl" tests of the individual sirens to ensure that each works.

Questions about the tests may be directed to the Brunswick County Office of Emergency Management, any CP&L business office or to CP&L's Visitors Center in Southport.

STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER

FIREFIGHTERS sift through remains of an old wooden barn that burned to the ground Sunday night in Shallotte.

Electrical Fire Destroys Barn

An electrical fire that may have been related to a severe storm Sunday night destroyed an old wooden barn in downtown Shallotte.

Robert Hawes owned the barn and packhouse located next to his residence on Smith Avenue near Twin Creek Plaza, said Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan.

Firefighters were called around 10:30 p.m. Sunday and stayed on the scene for approximately four hours. Some returned for two hours Monday morning to put more water on the charred building.

Logan said the fire may have been caused by a severe thunderstorm that passed through the area Sunday night. Lightning may have struck the barn or wind could have blown electrical wires together.

"It was electrical of some nature," he said. "We found enough wires beaded up to feel confident about that."

Logan said the barn was wired with heavy, single-strand wires that weren't insulated in some places.

Responding to the blaze were firefighters from Shallotte, Shallotte Point, Civietown, Supply and Sunset Beach.

Logan said the owner of the barn had been using it as a storage area. "It was packed with about anything you can think of," he said.

The structure, made mostly of lighter wood, contained desks, chairs, a tractor, hand tools, an air compressor and other items.

Logan didn't know the value of the building and its contents and said the owner couldn't provide an estimate either. He said Hawes was checking how much insurance coverage he had on the building.

State To Dedicate New DMV Office

State Transportation Secretary Tommy Harrelson will join other state and local officials Friday at the formal dedication of the new N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles building in Supply.

The ceremony starts at 2 p.m. at the building located on U.S. 17 across from The Brunswick Hospital. The 2,200-square-foot structure is a full-service driver license and enforcement office open weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Also participating in the ceremony will be Commissioner of Motor Vehicles Robert F. Hodges, N.C. Board of Transportation member Marilyn Williams, South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce President Terry Barbee and Brunswick County Board of Commissioners Chairman Kelly Holden.

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