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CONTACT: Roger Hannah 404-997-4417
Joey Ledford 404-997-4416

NRC Schedules Public Meeting to Discuss Results of Augmented Inspection at Westinghouse

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a public meeting in Columbia, S.C., on Tuesday, Sept. 27, to discuss the results of an Augmented Inspection Team review of the unexpected accumulation of an excessive amount of uranium-bearing material in a component of the Westinghouse fuel fabrication facility.

The meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. in the Gervais Street Room of the South Carolina State Museum at 301 Gervais St. The meeting is open to the public and the NRC staff will be available to answer questions after the meeting.

In May, during an annual maintenance shutdown, plant employees discovered an unexpected accumulation of uranium-bearing material in a scrubber system, which is designed to remove unwanted material from a number of plant processes. There were no actual safety-related consequences as a result of the accumulation, but the potential for such consequences may have existed. After an in-house analysis showed the amount of uranium was much higher than anticipated, the NRC launched the inspection to review the issue.

During the NRC inspection, the company committed to the temporary shutdown of affected systems in the facility, the performance of a root cause analysis investigation of the event and a review and revision of the facility's safety culture program. The facility also committed to updating maintenance and management procedures, installing physical modifications to the scrubber system, retraining of personnel operating and maintaining the system, reviewing other potentially affected systems and retaining an external nuclear criticality safety expert to oversee such functions.

The NRC expects to issue its inspection report, which could outline potential violations faced by Westinghouse, early next month. When issued, the report will be available on the NRC website or through the Office of Public Affairs.