

NPPD: No Danger From Cooper Nuclear Station Incident

(KLZA)-- No increase in radiation exposure to workers, and at no time was the public at risk from a Saturday evening incident at Cooper Nuclear Station near Brownville. That word Monday from Nebraska Public Power District, owner of the nuclear plant currently shut down for refueling.

According to a news release, shortly after 7 p-m Saturday evening, specialized contract technicians at the Cooper Station were performing a planned, underwater control blade “shuffle” where certain blades are replaced and others moved to new locations in the reactor core. One of the control rod blades fell from the lifting tool and came to rest on top of the reactor vessel top guide in a section that contained no fuel.

All activities were suspended in the area and the fuel was evaluated. The control blade was successfully and safely removed and placed in the proper locations in the spent fuel pool early Monday morning.

NPPD is working with the contractor to determine the cause of the incident. As part of its regular protocols, Cooper’s leadership informed the Nuclear Regulator Commission resident inspectors onsite and confirmed there were no indications of any adverse impact to the station’s fuel or radiation levels.

This is the 28th refueling outage performed at the Cooper Nuclear Station in 40 years. The control rod blades are approximately 14 feet in length, are X-shaped elements that occupy alternate spaces and separate the fuel assemblies throughout the core.

During refueling and maintenance outages, the reactor is shut down, which allows for removal and replacement of the components. Approximately a third of the fuel assemblies will be replaced with the new fuel rods to operate the plant for two years.

1,600 employees and contractors will complete approximately 4,500 work activities during the outage.

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