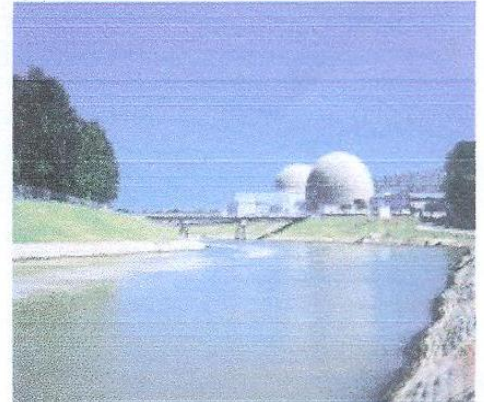


US plants safe in extreme events, NRC finds

16 May 2011

Inspections by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) have found that the country's nuclear reactors would be safe even in the event of power losses or extensive site damage following extreme events - although some plants still need to make improvements.

Inspections at all 104 of the USA's operating nuclear power plants were carried out in response to the damage suffered at the Fukushima nuclear power plant after the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan on 11 March. Resident NRC inspectors at all the US plants were directed to examine several areas including the plants' mitigative strategies, which ensure reactor cores and used fuel pools can be effectively cooled following large fires, explosions or other events. The plants' abilities to deal with the loss of all alternating current electricity sources, major flooding events, and fires combined with earthquakes were also examined.



The Surry nuclear power plant in Virginia shut down safely when a tornado hit recently (Image: NRC/Dominion Energy)

According to NRC Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation director Eric Leeds, the inspections revealed that all the reactors would remain safe should their regular safety systems be affected by such events, "although a few plants have to do a better job maintaining the necessary resources and procedures." Examples of such findings included equipment that would not start when tested, and mitigative equipment being used for other purposes at the plant or being stored in potentially vulnerable areas.

The NRC's existing reactor oversight process will be used to further evaluate the findings and make sure that any issues are fixed.

The NRC has promised to make all the inspection reports, minus information related to security issues, public on its website as soon as they become available.