

Environment & Energy

# NRC Failed in Nuke Plant Inspection, Internal Watchdog Says (1)

By Zach Bright

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The Nuclear Regulatory Commission failed its inspection of California's Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant, leading to an eight-day shutdown in July 2020, according to the Office of Inspector General.

In its report released Monday, the OIG said the commission did not identify degraded piping insulation that sprung the leak, which forced a shutdown three months later. The NRC had not inspected the area where leakage occurred, despite inspection reports revealing that a "complete walkdown" had occurred.

1. The report said the site's auxiliary feedwater system—a backup water supply to cool the reactor—did not receive proper NRC oversight, and the commission spent five hours fewer than the recommended 12 in direct inspections of Diablo Canyon's reactors.
2. "The NRC continues to have full confidence in its staff and their commitment to our important nuclear safety mission," an agency spokesman said. "We are reviewing the Inspector General's report and will take appropriate action if needed. At no time was public safety endangered because of this incident."
3. The Diablo Canyon site at Avila Beach is the only operational nuclear plant and largest single power station in California.
4. Pacific Gas and Electric plans to shutter the location's two reactors once its licenses expire in 2024 and 2025, though some have called to keep the plant operational to combat climate change.

(Adds response from NRC official.)

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