

Safety fears at Swedish nuclear plants

This is a diesel generator issue which might apply also in hospitals and other facilities that might need reserve power.

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Two reactors at the nuclear power plant in Oskarshamn were shut down on Wednesday night in response to an accident in Sweden last week.

An accident here at the Forsmark nuclear power plant in Sweden last week was called the most serious since Chernobyl.

A construction error that may have been behind the accident at the Forsmark nuclear power plant in Sweden last week may be present in all of the reactors in Sweden.

The mishap at Forsmark on July 25 could, according to Swedish nuclear power consultant Lars-Olvo Höglund, have led to a meltdown of the reactor and radioactive fallout. Höglund called the incident the most serious since Chernobyl, an assessment somewhat disputed by authorities.

The shutdown at the Oskarshamn plant came because management "could not guarantee security", Swedish newspaper Expressen reports. Two of three reactors at Oskarshamn were closed pending a check for the fault that affected the Forsmark plant.

The Swedish Radiation Protection Authority (SKI) has asked for a thorough report from all nuclear reactors in the country after the Forsmark accident.

"If it is the case that the error is present in the other reactors they will be closed today," SKI inspector Christer Karsson told Expressen on Thursday.

A short circuit at Forsmark caused an immediate shutdown in one of three reactors. At this point cooling must begin at once but only two of four diesel generators began the automatic process of pumping water to carry this out. Höglund said that "only luck" prevented disaster, as all of the generators shared the same construction error.

A nuclear disaster in Sweden would have serious consequences for Norway, far greater than Chernobyl, said nuclear physicist Nils Bøhmer at environmental group Bellona.

"It is surprising that this happens in Sweden, which has an extremely strict safety system for their nuclear power plants. I have been to Forsmark myself and there is a large difference between safety thinking there and, for example, in Russian plants," Bøhmer said.

"That such an accident can occur in a Swedish nuclear power plant – which has been considered the safest of the safe – shows that we can never be 100 percent sure about a nuclear power plant. This should get alarm bells to ring for those around the world that are considering new nuclear power plants," Bøhmer said.