

Nuclear Fuel Still Missing From Calif.

Ongoing record problem

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EUREKA, Calif. (AP) – Utility officials have yet to locate four pounds of missing radioactive nuclear fuel at a shuttered nuclear power plant, but federal regulators insisted the search must continue.

“You have to exhaust all avenues to find it, and we expect you to continue searching for it,” Bruce Mallet of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission told Pacific, Gas & Electric Co. officials at a public meeting Wednesday.

Three pieces of a nuclear fuel rod were discovered missing during an inventory in June at the Humboldt Bay Power Plant, and may be among hundreds placed in a deep storage pool before the plant closed in 1976. So far, a search has yielded 40 fuel fragments that are being analyzed to see if they match the missing pieces.

Gregory Reuger, PG&E's chief nuclear officer at the plant, said documents give conflicting clues. One set of records state the pieces were shipped; another, that the shipment was canceled and the pieces placed back in the pool.

Regulators and utility officials said they believe there's no public danger, and that there's no chance the missing fuel may have gotten into the wrong hands.

“We are confident that if the segments are not found in the pool, then they were transferred to a facility licensed to accept radioactive material,” said regulator Mark Satorius.