



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2005 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR DUANE ARNOLD NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of FPL Energy on Tuesday, April 11, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the company's Duane Arnold Energy Center. The plant is located at Palo, Iowa.

The meeting, which is open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. at the Palo Community Center, 1006 1st Street, in Palo. The NRC staff will present the results of the assessment and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Duane Arnold plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region III Administrator James Caldwell said. "This meeting will provide an opportunity for a discussion of our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and with local officials and residents who live near the plant. Our goal is to explain the NRC oversight process and make as much information as possible available to the public regarding our regulation of these facilities."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during the period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/duan_2005q4.pdf.

The NRC's assessment concluded that the Duane Arnold plant operated safely during the period. The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

All of the inspection findings and performance indicators for Duane Arnold during 2005 were determined to be "green." As a result of this performance, the NRC will conduct the normal, baseline level of inspections during the upcoming year.

However, the NRC identified a weakness in the area of human performance, involving inadequate use and adherence to plant procedures. The NRC asked the utility to discuss its corrective actions to address this issue during the meeting.

The NRC will conduct an inspection in 2006 to assess the utility's progress in improving human performance at the plant.

Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Md. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are the licensed operator requalification program, emergency preparedness, access control to radiologically significant areas, and radioactive material processing and transportation.

Current performance information for Duane Arnold is available on the NRC's web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/DUAN/duan_chart.html .

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