



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.

www.nrc.gov

No. I-06-024

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April 17, 2006

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2005 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of AmerGen Energy Co., LLC, on Monday, April 24, to discuss the agency's annual assessment of safety performance at the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant. The period of performance to be discussed is Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2005.

AmerGen operates the plant, which is located in Lacey Township (Ocean County), N.J.

The meeting, which will be open to the public for observation, is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. at the Oyster Creek Emergency Operating Facility, 1268 Route 37 West in Toms River, N.J. 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.

"As we do every year, we have carefully reviewed the safety performance of the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant during the previous calendar year," NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. "The meeting on April 24th will afford the public a chance to learn more about the results of our assessment and to pose any questions they might have regarding plant performance or our oversight activities."

A letter sent from the NRC Region I 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/oc_2005q4.pdf. The meeting notice, with the meeting agenda attached, is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML061000396. The NRC slides are available in ADAMS under accession number ML061000370. ADAMS is accessible via the agency's web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC's Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR@NRC.GOV.

Overall, the Oyster Creek plant operated safely during the period. The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear power plant performance. The colors

start with “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” or “red,” commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

At the end of 2005, there was one “white” (low to moderate safety significance) inspection finding open for the plant. In August of last year, Oyster Creek staff did not recognize that plant parameters met emergency action level thresholds during an event. For the first three quarters of last year, the plant also had another “white” inspection finding open. That finding involved an inadequate emergency planning event classification procedure. An NRC inspection in July 2005 determined that AmerGen’s corrective actions for that problem were satisfactory.

Because these two “white” findings in the emergency planning “cornerstone” overlapped in the third quarter of 2005, the plant was in the Degraded Cornerstone Column of the NRC’s Action Matrix during that period. However, it is currently in the Regulatory Response Column since only one of those findings remains open. Looking ahead, the agency plans to conduct a supplemental inspection in May to evaluate the effectiveness of the company’s corrective actions in the area of emergency planning. In addition, the agency will perform baseline, or routine, inspections at the facility throughout the year.

In the NRC’s mid-cycle assessment letter for Oyster Creek, issued on Aug. 30, 2005, the plant was advised that a substantive cross-cutting issue identified during the 2004 assessment year in the area of problem identification and resolution remained open. Since then, the NRC has determined that the company has demonstrated timely and effective corrective actions in this area following the implementation of program improvements in June 2005. Therefore, the agency has closed out that issue.

Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected during the next year by NRC specialists are radiological safety, problem identification and resolution, and operator licensing initial exams.

Current performance information for Oyster Creek is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/OC/oc_chart.html .

In addition to the April 24th annual assessment meeting, it should be noted that a separate meeting will be held on Thursday, April 20, regarding an audit related to the Oyster Creek license renewal application. Specifically, the findings of an NRC audit associated with the aging management programs and reviews used by AmerGen in developing the application will be discussed. The meeting, which will be open to the public for observation, will begin at 2 p.m. at the Lacey Township Municipal Building, 818 W. Lacey Road in Lacey. The NRC staff will present the audit results and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting. The notice for the meeting is available in ADAMS under accession number ML060790420.

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