



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2006 ASSESSMENT FOR OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT AT PUBLIC MEETING IN TOMS RIVER, N.J., ON MAY 23

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual assessment of safety performance at the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant, in Lacey Township (Ocean County), N.J., will be the subject of a public meeting on Wednesday, May 23.

NRC staff will meet with representatives of plant owner AmerGen Energy Co., LLC, at 7 p.m. to discuss the assessment, which covers the period from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2006, and was documented in a March 2nd letter to the company. The session will take place at the plant's Emergency Operations Facility, located at 1268 Route 37 West in Toms River, N.J.

Before the meeting is adjourned, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the performance of the Oyster Creek plant, as well as the role of the NRC in providing oversight of plant safety.

Prior to the formal meeting, the NRC will also conduct an informational open house from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the same location. It will provide an opportunity for members of the public to discuss topics related to Oyster Creek with agency staffers in an informal manner. There will also be informational handouts available.

"Each year we size up plant performance during the previous calendar year, with the overarching goal of ensuring that facilities are achieving the levels of safety that are essential to protecting the public and the environment," said NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins, who noted the agency also conducts mid-year assessments of performance. "At the May 23rd meeting, NRC staff will talk to members of the public about how we go about evaluating Oyster Creek and other nuclear power plants across the nation and will also answer questions from the audience."

Overall, the Oyster Creek plant operated safely during 2006. The NRC utilizes 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 conclusion of last year, all of the performance indicators for Oyster Creek were determined to be "green." With one exception, there were no inspection findings

for the plant that were identified as greater than “green” at that time.

There was a “white” (low to moderate safety significance) inspection finding in the area of emergency preparedness that was finalized on Jan. 9, 2006, and that remains open. That finding involved Oyster Creek staff not recognizing that plant parameters met emergency action level thresholds during an event in August 2005. In response to the “white” finding, the NRC conducted a supplemental inspection at the plant in May 2006 to determine if the problem had been properly addressed. Because the NRC was not satisfied with the progress of corrective actions to that point, the agency will conduct another supplemental inspection at the facility later this year to determine the status of the company’s corrective actions.

In the NRC’s mid-cycle assessment letter for Oyster Creek, issued on Aug. 31, 2006, the plant was also advised that the agency had identified a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of procedural adherence. A cross-cutting issue is one that touches on several different areas of performance. The NRC has inspected AmerGen’s efforts to address the issue but thus far has not seen consistent performance necessary for it to be closed out. The NRC will assess progress in this area in 2007 through a supplemental inspection, a Problem Identification and Resolution semi-annual trend review in the second quarter and routine inspections.

In addition, the NRC identified four “green” inspection findings in 2006 with documented cross-cutting aspects in the area of human performance. A human error prevention techniques cross-cutting theme was found to be associated with the findings. However, a substantive cross-cutting issue was not identified because AmerGen identified the theme and took corrective actions to address it.

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 performance at Oyster Creek to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are activities associated with radiological safety, emergency planning and the licensed operator requalification program.

The annual assessment letter for Oyster Creek is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/oc_2006q4.pdf . The notice for the meeting, with agenda attached, is available in the NRC’s Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML071290582. ADAMS is accessible at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> . Help in using ADAMS is available via the NRC’s Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR@NRC.GOV .

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

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