



NRC NEWS

U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2004 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION APRIL 6

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Energy Northwest on April 6 to discuss the results of the agency's assessment of safety performance at Columbia Generating Station during 2004. The plant is located near Richland, Wash.

The meeting will be held at 6 p.m. at the Energy Northwest Office Complex, Walkley Room, 3000 George Washington Way, Richland. Before the session is adjourned, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the plant's safety performance, as well as the agency's role in ensuring safe operation of the facility.

"Each year the NRC staff evaluates the performance of each of the nation's commercial nuclear plants," said Region IV Administrator Bruce S. Mallet. "This meeting gives us a chance to discuss our assessment with the company, local officials and residents near the plant. We want to make this information available to the public and answer any questions people may have about the plant."

A letter sent from the NRC Region IV Office in Arlington, Texas, to plant officials will serve as the basis for the meeting. It is available on the NRC web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/wnp_2004q4.pdf .

Overall, Columbia operated safely during 2004. The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with "green" and increase to "white," "yellow," and "red," according to the safety significance of the issues involved.

The NRC noted that deficiencies in the area of problem identification and resolution, mentioned in its mid-cycle letter of August 30, 2004, and the March 3, 2004, annual assessment letter, have been successfully addressed by the company.

However, the NRC staff has identified deficiencies in the area of human performance that have resulted in inadequate responses to plant conditions from both an operational and radiological standpoint. Although Energy Northwest has implemented an improvement program, the NRC staff will focus attention on this area as part of routine inspections during 2005.

Routine inspections are performed by the NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region IV office and the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Md.

Current information for Columbia is available on the NRC web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/WASH2/wash2_chart.html .

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