



NRC NEWS

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NRC REVISES SCHEDULE FOR REVIEWING EXISTING EARLY SITE PERMIT APPLICATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is extending the review schedules for the three Early Site Permit applications received in late 2003.

Given the unexpected volume of comments on Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and other factors, the NRC staff plans to finalize its review of the North Anna site (near Louisa, Va.) by late December, about four months later than originally scheduled. The review of the Grand Gulf site (near Vicksburg, Miss.) should be finalized by mid-April 2006, also about four months later than first planned. The review of the Clinton site (near Clinton, Ill.) should be finalized by late July 2006, about nine months later than planned. The staff's draft safety evaluation reports and draft EIS on all three ESP applications were issued in accordance with the originally established schedule.

Public comments on the draft EIS for the North Anna ESP site were much more numerous than anticipated when the NRC allocated resources for ESP reviews. The number of public comments on draft statements for the Clinton and Grand Gulf ESP sites also exceeded expectations.

"Public participation is an important part of the NRC's licensing process, and we want to ensure these comments are appropriately addressed in the sites' final EIS," said David Matthews, Director of the Division of Regulatory Improvement Programs in the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

The ESP process allows an applicant to address site-related issues, such as environmental impacts, for possible future construction and operation of a nuclear power plant at the site. If a permit is granted, the applicant has up to 20 years to decide whether to build a new nuclear unit on the site and to file an application with the NRC for approval to begin construction.

Notwithstanding these delays, the NRC's revised review completion dates of mid-2006 should have no impact on the applicants' ability to reference an ESP, if one is issued, in Combined Operating License applications expected in the 2008 time frame.

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