



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2006 PERFORMANCE AT COLUMBIA GENERATING STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet in Richland, Wash., on May 1, with representatives of Energy Northwest to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance last year at the Columbia Generating Station nuclear plant near Richland.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. at the Energy Northwest's Business Services Center, 3000 George Washington Way, Richland.

In addition to the performance assessment, the NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the safety performance of Columbia Generating Station, as well as the NRC's role in ensuring safe plant operation.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of Columbia Generating Station and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region IV Administrator Bruce S. Mallett 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."

A letter sent from the NRC Region IV office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during 2006 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/wnp_2006q4.pdf.

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.

The NRC said Columbia Generating Station operated safely during 2006, but during the first quarter was in the NRC's regulatory response column based on a "white" performance indicator due to a problem with a key safety system. A subsequent inspection indicated the licensee had successfully addressed the issue.

The letter also notes that a performance improvement plan to address problem identification and resolution issues has been successfully implemented. NRC will continue to focus attention on this area to verify that performance improvements are sustained.

Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region IV Office in Arlington, Texas. Among the areas of plant performance to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are activities associated with engineering, fire protection, emergency preparedness, maintenance and radiological controls.

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

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