



# NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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## **NRC TO DISCUSS 2009 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR BYRON NUCLEAR POWER PLANT UNIT 1 AND 2**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Exelon Generation Co. Thursday, April 2, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Byron Nuclear Power Plant. The plant has two reactor units in Byron, Ill.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. CDT at the Byron Station Training Center, Room 107 4450 N. German Church Road, Byron. The NRC staff will present the results of the assessment, talk about the NRC and its range of activities, and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Byron plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region III Administrator Mark Satorius said. "This meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and area residents. One of NRC's main goals is to explain to people in the community how the agency regulates nuclear power plants."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III 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/byro\\_2008q4.pdf](http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/byro_2008q4.pdf).

The NRC's assessment concluded Byron Units 1 and 2 operated safely during the period. 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" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

In 2008, NRC inspectors identified one “white” finding of low to moderate safety significance. This finding involved the degradation of the piping for the cooling of the non-radioactive support systems. The NRC conducted a supplemental inspection to review the utility’s actions to address the problem and found them adequate.

The letter also addressed a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of human performance. A “substantive cross-cutting” affects several areas of plant performance. Examples of cross-cutting issues include weaknesses in the staff’s ability to develop effective procedures and adhere to these procedures. When a substantive cross-cutting issue is identified at a nuclear power plant, the NRC expects the problem to be corrected.

At Byron, the substantive cross-cutting issue relates to the utility’s failure to make decisions in a conservative manner. The plant has initiated an improvement plan but, as noted in the NRC letter, it has not yet proven to be effective. The issue will remain open until the NRC has confidence that the human performance issue at the plant has been effectively addressed. The NRC has requested a written response regarding progress in improving cross-cutting issues at Byron. The status of the utility’s effort to improve human performance will be discussed at the public meeting.

This year, the NRC plans to continue to conduct the very detailed inspections required for plants operating well. In addition, the agency will inspect Byron’s problem identification and resolution program and preoperational testing of the independent spent fuel storage facility installations. Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency’s headquarters in Rockville, Md.

Current performance information for Byron is available on the NRC’s web site at: [http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BYRO1/byro1\\_chart.html](http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BYRO1/byro1_chart.html) (Unit 1) and [http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BYRO2/byro2\\_chart.html](http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BYRO2/byro2_chart.html) (Unit 2).

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