



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING ON MAY 19th IN BERWICK, PA., TO DISCUSS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF SUSQUEHANNA NUCLEAR PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a public meeting on Thursday, May 19, regarding the agency's annual assessment of safety performance for the Susquehanna nuclear power plant during 2010.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m. at the Eagle Building, at 107 S. Market St. in Berwick, Pa. Prior to the session's conclusion, there will be an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of the NRC staff regarding the plant's performance, as well as the agency's oversight of the facility.

Susquehanna is the site of two boiling-water reactors. It is located in Salem Township (Luzerne County), Pa., and is owned and operated by PPL.

"Our Annual Assessment reviews allow us to step back and gauge whether the nuclear power plants we regulate are on the right track in terms of performance and adhering to the highest levels of safety," NRC Region I Administrator Bill Dean said. "Once we've completed these evaluations, we reach out to the public to share that information and to receive their feedback at a location near each plant. We welcome and value these exchanges."

The NRC utilizes a combination of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to measure plant performance. The colors start with "green", representing very low safety significance, and increase to "white", "yellow" or "red", commensurate with the significance of the issues involved.

Overall, the Susquehanna Units 1 and 2 reactors operated safely during 2010. For Susquehanna Unit 2, as assessed through the NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, there were no inspection findings that were "Greater than Green" (rising to the level requiring additional NRC oversight) or any performance indicators that were other than "Green" (exceeding the threshold for the indicator and requiring additional NRC oversight). Therefore, for the remainder of 2011, it will receive the normal, very detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for plants that are operating well.

However, Susquehanna Unit 1 had a “White” (low to moderate safety significance) inspection finding during 2010 – a finding that is currently still open. The finding stems from an internal flooding event on July 16, 2010, which required plant operators to manually shut down the reactor.

Susquehanna Unit 1 will also receive additional oversight from the NRC this year for a performance indicator that changed to “White” as of the end of the first quarter of 2011. The performance indicator covers Unplanned Scrams (or shutdowns) per 7,000 Hours of Online Operation. This means that if a plant experiences more than three unplanned scrams during the previous 7,000 hours, the performance indicator will transition from “Green” to “White”. Susquehanna Unit 1 crossed that threshold at the end of the first quarter of this year. That performance indicator, combined with the “White” inspection finding, will place the unit in the “Degraded Cornerstone Column” of the NRC’s Action Matrix:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/actionmatrix_summary.html.

As a result of the “White” finding and Performance Indicator, Susquehanna Unit 1 is receiving additional scrutiny from the NRC during 2011. Specifically, the NRC will conduct – in addition to the normal, very detailed inspection regime -- a supplemental team inspection at the plant to independently verify whether PPL understands the root and contributing causes of the issues; has identified the extent of the conditions; and has taken appropriate corrective actions to prevent a recurrence.

Routine inspections are carried out by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to each plant and by inspection specialists from the agency’s Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. In 2010, the NRC devoted about 6,990 hours to inspection of Susquehanna, including two major team inspections. Among the areas at Susquehanna being inspected this year are the Unit 2 power uprate; fire protection; radiological safety; and emergency preparedness.

The agency issues its review of performance at specific plants twice a year. Inspection findings and performance indicators are also updated on the NRC’s website, www.nrc.gov, each quarter. Following the release of the annual performance reviews every March, the public is provided with an opportunity to discuss the results. The meetings, which are held in the vicinity of the plant, are in keeping with the NRC’s commitment to transparency and openness with regard to its activities.

The annual assessment letter for Susquehanna Units 1 and 2 is available on the NRC website at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/susq_2010q4.pdf. The notice for the public meeting is available in the NRC’s Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML111120313. ADAMS is available at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Help in using ADAMS can be obtained via the NRC’s Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR.Resources@NRC.GOV.

Current performance information for Susquehanna Unit 1 is available on the NRC website at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SUSQ1/susq1_chart.html. Current performance information for Susquehanna Unit 2 is available on the NRC website at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SUSQ2/susq2_chart.html.

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