



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING ON MARCH 23 IN ONTARIO, N.Y., TO DISCUSS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE OF GINNA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, March 23 regarding the agency's annual assessment of safety performance for the Ginna nuclear power plant during 2009.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m. at Ontario Town Hall, at 1850 Ridge Road in Ontario, N.Y. Prior to the meeting'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.

Ginna is a pressurized-water reactor located in Ontario. It is owned and operated by Constellation Energy. Constellation managers will participate in the meeting.

Overall, Ginna operated safely during 2009. However, at the conclusion of last year, and continuing into 2010, the facility has been in what is known as the "Degraded Cornerstone" column of the NRC's Action Matrix for plant performance, which is available at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/actionmatrix_summary.html. That categorization is based on the plant receiving two "white" (low to moderate safety significance) inspection findings and a "white" performance indicator, all in 2009. As a result of that designation, Ginna is receiving NRC additional oversight until the agency is satisfied that the root and contributing causes of the problems are fully understood by the company; in order for the NRC to independently assess the extent of the condition and determine if safety culture problems contributed to the issues; and to provide assurance that sufficient corrective actions have been implemented to prevent recurrences.

One of the white inspection findings originated in the first quarter of last year and was related to inadequate implementation of a preventive maintenance program for, and subsequent failure of, a speed control, or governor, for a turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater pump. An auxiliary feedwater pump is used to help cool down the reactor during a sudden shutdown. The second white inspection finding, which originated in the fourth quarter of 2009, pertained to inadequate corrective actions that led to the binding of the same speed control valve and the failure of the same pump to operate during testing.

With respect to the performance indicator, it resulted from Ginna exceeding the white threshold for the Mitigating Systems Performance Index/Heat Removal Systems Performance Indicator in the third quarter of 2009. This was due to reliability and unavailability issues associated with the same auxiliary feedwater pump.

Routine inspections are carried out by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the agency's Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas at Ginna to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are the dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel, which will begin at the site later this year; radiation safety; operator licensing initial exams; and the plant's problem identification and resolution program.

In addition to routine inspections, the NRC plans to conduct a supplemental inspection at Ginna in 2010 to determine if Constellation has corrected the deficiencies associated with the pump.

"The additional oversight by the NRC will help ensure these issues are receiving the attention they deserve," NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins. "The turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater pump is an important plant component and we fully expect Constellation to do what it takes to address any and all problems that could adversely affect its performance."

In 2009, the NRC devoted approximately 5,800 hours to inspection of the facility, including two major team inspections.

The NRC utilizes a combination of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to gauge plant performance. The colors start with "green," representing very low safety significance, to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the significance of the issues involved. The agency issues reports on performance at specific plants twice a year; during the mid-cycle, or mid-point, of the year, and at the conclusion of the year. Inspection findings and performance indicators are also updated on the NRC's web site, www.nrc.gov, each quarter. Following the release of the annual reports every March, the NRC meets with the public in the vicinity of each plant to discuss the results. The meetings are in keeping with the agency's commitment to transparency with regard to its activities.

The annual assessment letter for the Ginna plant is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/ginn_2009q4.pdf. The notice for the annual assessment meeting for the plant is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML100690412. 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 Ginna is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/GINN/ginn_chart.html.

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