



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC ANNOUNCES ENHANCED OVERSIGHT OF VERMONT YANKEE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will conduct additional inspections at the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant, operated by Entergy Nuclear and located in Vernon, Vt. Through enhanced specialized inspections, the NRC will oversee Entergy's efforts to address groundwater contamination at the site and to review and assess the company's response to an NRC Demand for Information (DFI) issued in early March.

In January, Entergy notified the NRC that it had received positive sample results for tritium from a groundwater well at Vermont Yankee. The NRC has been closely monitoring Entergy's actions to identify, mitigate, characterize and remediate the source of the contamination. The NRC's Resident Inspectors and regional specialists continue to provide oversight of the company's actions through direct observations and independent assessments. The current tritium contamination does not pose any health or safety concern for members of the public or plant workers.

On March 1, the NRC issued a DFI requiring Entergy to confirm that information provided to the NRC that is material to NRC decisions is accurate and that the impact of recent personnel changes is assessed with regards to regulatory program performance and safety culture. This action stemmed from an Entergy decision to take action against certain employees at Vermont Yankee as a result of Entergy's independent internal investigation into alleged contradictory or misleading information provided to the State of Vermont and then not corrected. Entergy responded to that DFI on March 31 and agreed to conduct additional communications and outreach activities with stakeholders.

Under the NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, a plant's performance determines the level of inspection conducted at the site. To provide additional oversight, the agency can decide to deviate from the process and conduct further inspections, etc., when warranted by the given situation. Any such plans are proposed in a memo from the Regional Administrator for approval by the Executive Director for Operations. The memo, called a "Deviation Memo," provides a

formal vehicle to document the NRC's additional inspection plans to assess Entergy's groundwater efforts. It also provides resources for the staff to thoroughly evaluate Entergy's response to the DFI.

NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said, "In the case of Vermont Yankee, the staff considers it prudent to apply additional inspection focus to specific areas, even though licensee performance in these areas has not crossed any specific thresholds mandating additional regulatory oversight.

Regarding the groundwater contamination, Collins said, "Although there is not currently a public health and safety issue, additional NRC inspections and assessments as well as increased external stakeholder communications and outreach would help address stakeholder concerns. And, while the agency is not aware of any information that Entergy has provided to the NRC that was incomplete or inaccurate, recent events which led to the NRC decision to issue the DFI warrant additional sampling and independent verification. We will not hesitate to take prompt action if necessary to ensure that public health and safety and protection of the environment is maintained."

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