



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2009 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR DRESDEN NUCLEAR POWER PLANT APRIL 28

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Exelon Generation Company on Wednesday, April 28, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance last year at the Dresden Nuclear Power Plant. The two-unit plant is located in Morris, Ill., roughly 60 miles southwest of Chicago.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6:30 p.m. CDT at the Grundy County Administration Center, Grundy County Board Room, 1320 Union Street, in Morris. 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.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Dresden 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/dres_2009q4.pdf.

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

The NRC's assessment concluded that Dresden Unit 2 and 3 operated safely in 2009. Dresden Unit 2 performed at a level that required no additional oversight. However, Unit 3 had one "white" finding of low to moderate safety significance that will result in additional NRC

oversight. The finding was associated with an inadvertent and uncontrolled withdrawal of control rods - which control the nuclear reaction in a reactor - when non-licensed operators were performing maintenance activities without the involvement of licensed operators at the controls. The NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection to make sure the problems surrounding the finding have been understood and resolved.

The NRC letter also addressed one substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of human performance. Cross-cutting issues are issues that “cut across” multiple areas of plant operation. Examples of cross-cutting issues include problems associated with the plant staff’s ability to identify and correct problems, to develop effective procedures and adhere to these procedures. These issues cannot be quantified and are not assigned safety significance. The plant had developed a plan to address these issues but its implementation has been effective. When a substantive cross-cutting issue is identified at a nuclear power plant, the NRC expects the problem to be corrected.

In addition to the supplemental inspection, the NRC will continue to conduct the very detailed routine inspections for plants that are performing well. Inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant, and inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are radiation protection, the independent spent fuel storage installation and license renewal.

Current performance information for Dresden is available on the NRC’s web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/DRES2/dres2_chart.html (Unit 2) and http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/DRES3/dres3_chart.html (Unit 3).

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