



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING ON MAY 25th TO DISCUSS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT FOR OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, May 25 regarding the agency's annual assessment of safety performance for the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant during 2009.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Holiday Inn – Toms River, at 290 Route 37 East in Toms River, N.J. 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 and about the agency's oversight of the facility.

The NRC staff will also conduct an informational poster-board session for interested members of the public in conjunction with the meeting. That session, which will run from 6 to 7 p.m. at the same location, will allow those in attendance to discuss plant-related topics on a one-on-one basis with NRC staff, as well as provide information on agency activities on poster boards.

Oyster Creek is the site of a single boiling-water reactor. It is located in Lacey Township (Ocean County) and is owned and operated by Exelon Generation Co., LLC.

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, and increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the significance of the issues involved.

Overall, Oyster Creek operated safely during 2009. However, at the conclusion of last year, and continuing into 2010, the facility was in what is known as the "Regulatory Response" 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 was based on the plant's Performance Indicator for Unplanned Scrams (shutdowns) per 7,000 hours of operation changing from "green" to "white" in the third quarter of 2009. The Performance Indicator, which is based on a rolling average, subsequently returned to "green" in the fourth quarter of last year.

As a result of the “white” Performance Indicator, Oyster Creek received additional NRC oversight. In mid-February 2010, the agency conducted a supplemental inspection to determine whether the company fully understood the root and contributing causes; had evaluated the extent of the condition; and had implemented sufficient corrective actions to prevent a recurrence. An NRC report on the inspection issued on March 8, 2010 found Exelon’s actions to be appropriate. Therefore, the agency resumed a normal level of oversight for the plant as of that time.

In 2009, the NRC devoted about 8,200 hours to inspection of the facility, including 13 inspections by specialists from the agency’s regional office.

“Each year, the NRC steps back and assesses the performance of nuclear power plants in a systematic and detailed manner. We take these reviews very seriously and they help guide our oversight in the year ahead,” NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. “We also believe that providing the public with an opportunity to not only learn about these results first-hand but to communicate with us on our determinations is an integral part of the process and consistent with our commitment to openness and transparency.”

In addition to issuing inspection reports, 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 web site, www.nrc.gov, each quarter. Following the release of the annual performance reviews every March, the NRC meets with plant management and the public in the vicinity of each facility 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 Oyster Creek plant is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/oc_2009q4.pdf. The notice for the open house is available in the NRC’s Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML101230079. 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.

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 Oyster Creek to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are the dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel, the plant’s problem identification and resolution program, and emergency preparedness. In addition, a post-approval site inspection for license renewal is scheduled for November 2010.

Current performance information for Oyster Creek is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/oc_2009q4.pdf.

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