



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2007 PERFORMANCE OF BROWNS FERRY NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a meeting for Wednesday, April 16, with representatives of the Tennessee Valley Authority to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance during 2007 at the three-unit Browns Ferry nuclear power plant, operated by TVA near Athens, Ala.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. (CDT) in the Browns Ferry Training Center at the plant site at 10833 Shaw Rd., near Athens.

After the formal presentation, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the safety performance of Browns Ferry, as well as the NRC's role in ensuring safe plant operation.

"The NRC continually inspects and reviews the performance at Browns Ferry and all commercial nuclear plants, issuing inspection reports throughout the year and an overall assessment at year's end," NRC Region II Administrator Victor McCree said. "This meeting is an opportunity to discuss that annual assessment with the company, local officials and people living near the plant, and to answer any questions they may have."

NRC officials reviewed performance indicators at the plant for the last quarter of 2007 and inspection results for the period from Jan. 1 through Dec. 31, 2007. Overall, the agency said all three units operated in a way that protected public health and safety but with some moderate decrease in safety performance.

Unit 1, which resumed operation on May 22, 2007 after a 17-year outage, had a moderately degraded or "yellow" performance indicator for the last quarter of 2007 because the reactor experienced a high number of automatic shutdowns called "scrams" per 7,000 hours of operation while the normal fission process (criticality) was in progress. The NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection on Unit 1 when TVA notifies the agency that the unit is ready, in addition to routine reactor oversight baseline inspections.

Units 2 and 3 performed safely during the 2007 period of assessment with all inspection findings and performance indicators being of very low safety significance. The NRC will perform only routine, baseline inspections at those units during 2008.

Additionally, the NRC staff said it identified more than three “green” inspection findings with documented cross-cutting aspects in the area of Problem Identification and Resolution (PI&R) with a cross-cutting theme in the area of appropriate and timely corrective action associated with the findings. NRC inspectors during 2008 will monitor these issues during routine baseline inspections and perform a more focused inspection of TVA’s Corrective Action Program. Also, a biennial PI&R inspection, originally planned for 2009, has been rescheduled for October 2008.

When assessing nuclear plant performance, the NRC uses color-coded performance indicators and inspection findings. The colors start with “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” or “red” based on the safety significance of the issues involved.

A letter sent from the NRC Region II office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during 2007 and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/bf_2007q4.pdf .

Current performance information for the two units at Browns Ferry plant is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BF1/bf1_chart.html , www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BF2/bf2_chart.html , and www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BF3/bf3_chart.html .

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