



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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No. I-08-051

Sept. 11, 2008

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ASLB PANEL TO HEAR ORAL ARGUMENTS ON SEPT. 18 IN TOMS RIVER, N.J., REGARDING OYSTER CREEK LICENSE RENEWAL

An Atomic Safety and Licensing Board (ASLB) panel will hear oral arguments on Thursday, Sept. 18, on an issue regarding the proposed relicensing of the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant. The issue to be argued relates to AmerGen's proposal to prepare a 3-D model showing the effects of corrosion on the Lacey Township (Ocean County), N.J., plant's drywell shell, a bulb-shaped, steel liner that surrounds the reactor vessel.

The adjudicative proceeding is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. in Room 119 of the Ocean County Administration Building, at 101 Hooper Ave. in Toms River, N.J. (Directions are available at: <http://www.co.ocean.nj.us/ComplexMapPage.aspx>.) During the proceeding, lawyers for the parties involved will respond to questions pertaining to the issue from the three judges on the ASLB panel. Members of the public will be able to observe but will not be permitted to participate in the oral arguments. The public is also advised that agency procedures prohibit the use of signs, banners, posters and displays at all NRC adjudicative proceedings.

In July 2005, AmerGen Energy Co., LLC, which owns and operates Oyster Creek, applied to the NRC for a 20-year license extension. The current 40-year operating license for the plant is set to expire on April 9, 2009.

The NRC provided an opportunity for interested governmental entities, groups and individuals to request a hearing challenging AmerGen's renewal request, and a coalition of environmental groups proffered a single contention, which the ASLB panel admitted for adjudication. The contention asserts that AmerGen's license renewal application should be denied because its aging management program for corrosion in the sandbed region of the drywell shell is inadequate.

Following an evidentiary hearing held from Sept. 24 to 25, 2007, in Toms River, the ASLB panel ruled on Dec. 18, 2007, that the contention lacked merit. On Jan. 14, 2008, the coalition filed an appeal to the presidentially appointed Commission that oversees the NRC and that serves as the appeals panel for such cases.

On May 28, 2008, while the appeal was pending, the Commission asked that the parties involved – the coalition, AmerGen and the NRC staff – for additional briefs discussing whether a structural analysis that AmerGen had committed to perform, and that will result in a 3-D model of the drywell shell, will accurately reflect the condition of the shell. On Aug. 21, 2008, the Commission referred this issue to the ASLB panel for resolution. The oral arguments on Sept. 18 will give the parties an opportunity to advocate their positions and to answer the judges' questions.

Additional information about the Oyster Creek license renewal application review is available at:

<http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/licensing/renewal/applications/oystercreek.html> .

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