



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO MEET JUNE 22 WITH WESTINGHOUSE ELECTRIC CO. TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT HEMATITE, MO., FACILITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet June 22 with officials of Westinghouse Electric Co. in Lisle, Ill., to discuss apparent violations of NRC requirements at the company's former fuel fabrication facility in Hematite, Mo.

The meeting will be at 1:30 p.m. in the NRC's Region III Office, 2443 Warrenville Rd., Suite 210, in Lisle. The meeting is open to public observation. At the conclusion of the business portion of the meeting, NRC officials will be available for questions and comments from members of the public attending the meeting.

An NRC inspection at the Hematite facility, conducted January through April, identified three apparent violations of NRC requirements for assuring that uranium used in nuclear fuel processing is properly controlled and stored to preclude any accidental nuclear reaction.

The information discussed in the June 22 meeting will be used by the NRC in determining what enforcement action, if any, should be taken. Enforcement actions may include issuance of a Notice of Violation or possible fines against Westinghouse.

The Hematite plant processed and fabricated fuel for nuclear power plants from 1974 until operations ceased in 2001. Westinghouse is performing limited decommissioning activities at the site, including surveys and removal of processing equipment and piping, ventilation ducts, and other material contaminated with low-enriched uranium.

NRC inspectors found that components containing uranium residues were not properly stored, that equipment and components were not properly analyzed before being stored, and that the plant's procedures did not include necessary controls for handling and storing uranium-contaminated components.

"The NRC imposes strict requirements for surveying and storing equipment containing uranium fuel residues," said James Caldwell, NRC Regional Administrator. "Although Westinghouse failed to meet these requirements, our inspectors determined there was no possibility of an accidental nuclear reaction at the Hematite facility."

Caldwell noted that since these apparent violations were identified, Westinghouse has taken steps to correct the deficiencies and assure that uranium-contaminated equipment is properly evaluated and stored during decommissioning activities.

The meeting between the NRC staff and Westinghouse, called a predecisional enforcement conference, is an opportunity for Westinghouse to provide its perspective on the apparent violations and to offer any other information that they believe the NRC should take into consideration in making an enforcement decision. No decision on the apparent violations or any enforcement action will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made later by NRC officials.

The inspection report describing the apparent violations is available from the Region III Office of Public Affairs or from the agency's online document library (known as ADAMS): <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html> - use accession number ML051600009 in the search box to locate the report. For assistance in using ADAMS, you may contact the NRC Public Document Room staff at 800/397-4209.

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