



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

61 Forsyth Street SW, Atlanta GA 30303

Web Site: www.nrc.gov

No. II-07-001

January 11, 2007

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NRC SCHEDULES REGULATORY CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS OCONEE NUCLEAR PLANT CONCERN

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has scheduled a regulatory conference with officials of Duke Energy Jan. 17 in Atlanta to discuss the possible risk posed by debris found in emergency cooling system pipes at the company's Oconee nuclear power plant near Seneca in northwestern South Carolina.

NRC and Duke officials will discuss the significance of an NRC inspection finding related to foreign material or debris in the plant's Unit 3 emergency sump suction piping.

Prior to some modifications last year, plant employees discovered several items inside the pipes. Those pipes are used to carry water collected in the bottom of the reactor building to pumps that help keep the reactor core covered during certain accidents. Duke officials say it is not possible to know when the material may have entered the pipes, but it had been there for more than a year.

An NRC inspection found that the presence of the material indicated that Duke failed to implement adequate foreign material exclusion controls, and that there was not reasonable assurance that the pumps would have performed their function if needed.

The NRC evaluates regulatory performance at commercial nuclear power plants with a color-coded system which classifies findings as either green, white, yellow or red, in increasing order of safety significance. The NRC's preliminary evaluation determined that this issue at Oconee is "greater than green," meaning it has more than very low safety significance.

The meeting is scheduled for 10:30 a.m. in the NRC's Region II office, located on the 24th floor of the Atlanta Federal Center at 61 Forsyth Street SW in Atlanta. The public is invited to attend to observe and will have one or more opportunities to talk with NRC officials after the business portion, but before the meeting is adjourned.

No decisions on final safety significance, any apparent violations or possible enforcement action will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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