



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2006 ASSESSMENT FOR SEABROOK NUCLEAR PLANT AT PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 29

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual assessment of safety performance at the Seabrook nuclear power plant, in Seabrook, N.H., will be the subject of a public meeting on Thursday, March 29.

NRC staff will meet with representatives of plant owner FPL Energy Seabrook, LLC, at 6:30 p.m. to discuss the assessment, which covers the period from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2006, and was documented in a March 2nd letter to the company. The session will take place in the Galley Hatch Conference Center at the Inn of Hampton, 815 Lafayette Road in Hampton, N.H. (Directions are available on the inn's web site at: <http://www.theinnofhampton.com/>.)

Before the meeting is adjourned, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the performance of the Seabrook plant, as well as the role of the NRC in providing oversight of plant safety.

"Each year we take a step back to size up plant performance during the previous calendar year, with the overarching goal of ensuring that facilities are achieving the levels of safety that are essential to protecting the public and the environment," said NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins, who noted the agency also conducts mid-year assessments of performance. "At the meeting on March 29th, members of the public will receive information about how we go about that review process for Seabrook and other nuclear power plants across the nation. The NRC staff will also be prepared to answer questions from attendees."

The annual assessment letter for Seabrook is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/seab_2006q4.pdf. The notice for the meeting, with the agenda attached, is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML070720415. ADAMS is accessible via the agency's web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC's Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR@NRC.GOV.

Overall, the Seabrook plant operated safely during 2006. The NRC utilizes color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear power plant performance. The colors start with “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” or “red,” commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved. Because all of the performance indicators for the Seabrook plant were determined to be “green” and there were no inspection findings greater than “green” at the end of 2006, the plant will receive the baseline, or routine, level of inspections in 2007.

Seabrook did have a “white” performance indicator in the third quarter of last year. That was due, in part, to both of the plant’s emergency diesel generators becoming temporarily inoperable in late August 2006 as a result of voltage regulator problems. Both generators were subsequently repaired in early September 2006. In response to the situation, the company performed a root cause evaluation of the failures and the NRC conducted a special inspection to review FPL’s response. The performance indicator returned to “green” in the fourth quarter of 2006. Nevertheless, the NRC intends to perform a supplemental inspection in May 2007 to ensure that the company fully understands the root causes and contributing causes of the failures, identifies the extent of condition and establishes corrective actions that are sufficient to prevent recurrence.

Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas of plant performance to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are the dry cask storage of spent fuel, emergency preparedness and control room operator training and testing.

Current performance information for Seabrook is available on the NRC web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SEAB1/seab1_chart.html.

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