



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

2443 Warrenville Road

Lisle IL 60532

Web Site: <http://www.nrc.gov> E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov

No. III-07-007

March 23, 2007

CONTACT: Viktoria Mitlyng (630) 829-9662

NRC to Discuss 2006 Performance Assessment for Kewaunee Nuclear Power Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Dominion Energy Kewaunee on Thursday, March 29, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Kewaunee Nuclear Power Plant. The plant is located at Kewaunee, Wisc.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. at the Kewaunee Municipal Building Council Chamber Conference Room, 401 5th Street. The NRC staff will present the results of the assessment and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Kewaunee plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region III Administrator James Caldwell said. "This meeting will provide an opportunity for a discussion of our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and with local officials and residents who live near the plant. Our goal is to explain the NRC oversight process and make as much information as possible available to the public regarding our regulation of these facilities."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during the period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/kewa_2006q4.pdf.

The NRC's assessment concluded that overall the Kewaunee plant operated safely during the period but with moderate degradation in safety performance. The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

All of the inspection findings during 2006 were determined to be "green."

There was one "white" performance indicator reflecting the increased number of unplanned plant shutdowns.

The letter also addresses two substantive cross-cutting areas; problem identification and resolution and human performance. These issues are referred to as "substantive cross-cutting" because they affect multiple areas of plant performance.

The NRC's letter to the utility refers to six inspection findings that are attributed to inadequate problem evaluation and seven findings attributed to problems with human performance. The letter states that both of these issues will remain open until the number of findings with the same cross-cutting aspect is reduced or when the NRC gains confidence in the plant's ability to identify and address technical and human performance problems.

As a result, in addition to the normal, baseline level of inspections during the upcoming year, the NRC will conduct a follow-up inspection related to the "white" performance indicator.

As part of the NRC's continuing review of the substantive cross-cutting issues, an expanded problem identification and resolution inspection will be conducted. In addition, the NRC will hold a public meeting during which the utility has been asked to discuss its efforts and progress in addressing these issues.

Routine and focused inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Md.

Current performance information for Kewaunee is available on the NRC's web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/KEWA/kewa_chart.html .

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