



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT FOR SALEM, HOPE CREEK PLANTS AT PUBLIC MEETING SET FOR MAY 5 IN WOODSTOWN, N.J.

The results of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual safety performance assessment for the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear power plants will be the subject of a public meeting on Tuesday, May 5.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. at the Salem 911/Emergency Services Center, 125 Cemetery Road in Woodstown, N.J. Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the plants' performance, as well as the agency's oversight of the facility.

Salem is the site of two pressurized-water reactors while Hope Creek is the site of a single boiling-water reactor. All of the reactors are located in Hancocks Bridge (Salem County), N.J. They are owned and operated by PSEG.

Overall, the Salem and Hope Creek plants operated safely during 2008. At the conclusion of last year, as assessed by the NRC Reactor Oversight Process, there were no performance indicators for the plants that were other than "green" and no inspection findings that were "greater than green." Therefore, for the rest of 2009, the plants will receive the very detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for plants that are operating well. In 2008, the NRC devoted approximately 8,000 hours of inspection to Salem, including four major team inspections, and 4,700 hours to Hope Creek, including two major team inspections.

The NRC did identify what is known as a "substantive cross-cutting issue" – an issue that cuts across multiple areas of performance – at the Salem plant. That issue involves human performance, with a cross-cutting theme having to do with documentation and procedure adequacy. During the 2008 assessment period, there were seven inspection findings pertaining to this theme. NRC staff intends to monitor PSEG's progress in addressing this issue via the agency's routine oversight process.

“In 2008, all but one of the 26 commercial power reactors in Region I, which covers the Northeastern United States, fully met our clearly defined performance criteria. Salem and Hope Creek were among the plants achieving those objectives. That means those plants will receive the normal level of NRC oversight this year if they continue to meet the high safety benchmarks set out for each site,” said NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins. “That said, our inspectors will remain on the lookout for any problems or adverse trends that might indicate a change in performance. As always, we will not hesitate to act should we identify any safety concerns.”

The NRC utilizes a combination of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to measure plant performance. The colors start with “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” or “red,” commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved. The agency issues reports on performance at specific plants twice a year: During the mid-cycle, or mid-point, of the year, and at the conclusion of the year. Inspection findings and performance indicators are also updated on the NRC’s web site, www.nrc.gov, each quarter. Following the release of the annual reports every March, the NRC meets with the public in the vicinity of each plant to discuss the results. The meetings are in keeping with the agency’s commitment to transparency with regard to its activities.

The annual assessment letter for the Salem plant is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/salm_2008q4.pdf. The annual assessment letter for the Hope Creek plant is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/hope_2008q4.pdf. The notice for the annual assessment meeting is available in the NRC’s Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML091070316. ADAMS is available at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>. Help in using ADAMS can be obtained via the NRC’s Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR.Resource@NRC.GOV.

Routine inspections are carried out by the four NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to Salem and Hope Creek (two at each plant) and by inspection specialists from the agency’s Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas at Salem to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are fire protection, problem identification and resolution, radiological safety and emergency planning. Among the areas at Hope Creek to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are radiological safety, emergency planning, problem identification and resolution, and a proposed power uprate for the reactor.

Current performance information for Salem 1 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SALM1/salm1_chart.html. Current performance information for Salem 2 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SALM2/salm2_chart.html. Current performance information for Hope Creek is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/HOPE/hope_chart.html.

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