



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS NFS PERFORMANCE AT PUBLIC MEETING IN ERWIN

Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials will meet with management of Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) in Erwin, Tenn., on Thursday, Sept. 24 to discuss the results of a licensee performance review for the company's nuclear fuel facility in Erwin.

The meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Circuit Court Room on the second floor of the Unicoi County Courthouse, 100 Main St. in Erwin. The town of Erwin is accessible from Interstate 26 via Exit 37 (Tenn. Highway 107). The meeting will be open to members of the public and the news media. NRC officials will open the meeting with a brief presentation on the company's performance, and then be available to answer questions or listen to comments about the facility.

The NRC staff assessed performance at NFS during a period beginning July 6, 2008 and ending April 5, 2009, in the areas of safety operations, radiological controls, facility support and special topics, and those evaluations will form the basis of the meeting discussion. Security was also assessed, but that area will not be discussed publicly due to the sensitive nature of the information. The NRC staff review determined that NFS continued to conduct its activities safely and securely, protecting the public, workers and the environment.

"While we acknowledge that NFS managers and workers are operating the facility safely, the NRC believes there is room for continued improvement in several areas," said NRC Region II Deputy Administrator for Operations Victor McCree. "This meeting is an opportunity for us to discuss those areas and overall safety performance with company officials and interested people from the area."

As part of its review, the NRC staff identified that additional management attention is needed to reduce the potential for human error. The NRC believes that reduction can best be accomplished by improved written procedures, adequate pre-job briefings, more awareness of individual work activities, independent verification and other controls. In a letter sent to NFS, the NRC noted that human performance issues are included in the NFS safety culture improvement plan, developed as a result of the NRC's Feb. 2007 Confirmatory Order.

Even though NRC inspections found that NFS has made progress within that plan, the review indicated that additional improvements are still needed. The NRC also identified opportunities to improve certain aspects of the NFS corrective action program including the

consistency and thoroughness of evaluations, the consistency of extent of condition reviews and the effectiveness of corrective actions.

The NRC will continue to inspect and assess improvement plan activities at NFS, including the corrective action program and the site's safety culture, and will issue periodic inspection reports detailing those efforts. The NRC expects to conduct the next full licensee performance review at NFS in about nine months.

A copy of the NRC letter detailing the NFS review is available online in the NRC's Agency-wide Document Access and Management System at www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html . The ML number is ML092260139.

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