



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING ON APRIL 27 IN BERWICK, PA. TO DISCUSS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF SUSQUEHANNA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, April 27 regarding the agency's annual assessment of safety performance for the Susquehanna nuclear power plant during 2009.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 3:30 p.m. at the Susquehanna Energy Information Center, at 634 Salem Blvd. in Berwick, Pa. Prior to the meeting's conclusion, there will be an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of the NRC staff regarding the plant's performance, as well as the agency's oversight of the facility. From 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the same location, NRC staff will hold an information session, during which they will be available to answer questions from and conduct discussions with attendees in a less formal setting.

Susquehanna, which is the site of two boiling-water reactors, is located in Salem Township (Luzerne County), Pa. The plant is owned and operated by PPL.

The NRC utilizes a combination of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to gauge plant performance. The colors start with "green," representing very low safety significance, and increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the significance of the issues involved.

Overall, Susquehanna operated safely during 2009. At the conclusion of last year, as assessed by the NRC Reactor Oversight Process, there were no performance indicators for the plant that were other than "green" and no inspection findings that were "greater than green." Therefore, for the remainder of 2010, Susquehanna will continue to receive the very detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for plants that are operating well.

On Jan. 28, 2009, the NRC issued a potential "chilling effect" letter to PPL regarding possible worker concerns about the site's "safety conscious work environment," which refers to an environment in which plant employees feel free to raise safety concerns without fear of reprisal. During 2009, the NRC reviewed PPL's action plans and root-cause evaluations aimed at

addressing safety conscious work environment issues at the plant. The NRC assessments included targeted inspections and trend reviews, as well as reviews of an independent safety culture survey performed for PPL at Susquehanna. Further, NRC management conducted several site visits and held a public meeting at the facility on July 6, 2009 to discuss the issues.

Among the actions taken by PPL to improve the plant's safety conscious work environment are organizational changes, improved communications to the workforce, additional training for supervisors and managers, work policy revisions and the development of additional means for workers to raise issues. Based on direct inspection, allegation trend data, metrics and survey results, the NRC determined that PPL made reasonable progress in addressing safety conscious work environment issues at Susquehanna during 2009. Specifically, the NRC determined the company recognized the issue impacted multiple areas of site performance; took appropriate and timely actions; and completed a range of corrective actions. The NRC's assessment of the activities has found them to be appropriate to address the underlying issues to date. However, the NRC plans to continue to monitor PPL's activities to address issues in this area through focused inspections.

In 2009, the NRC devoted approximately 6,556 hours to inspection of the Susquehanna facility, including two major team inspections.

"Each year, the NRC steps back and assesses the performance of nuclear power plants in a systematic and detailed manner. We take these reviews very seriously and they help guide our oversight in the year ahead," NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. "We also believe that providing the public with an opportunity to not only learn about these results first-hand but to communicate with us on our determinations is an integral part of the process and consistent with our commitment to openness and transparency."

The agency issues its review of performance at specific plants twice a 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 performance reviews every March, the public is provided with an opportunity to discuss the results. The meetings, which are held in the vicinity of each plant, are in keeping with the agency's commitment to transparency with regard to its activities.

The annual assessment letter for the Susquehanna plant is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/susq_2009q4.pdf. The notice for the annual assessment meeting for the plant is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML100690255. ADAMS is available at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.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.Resources@NRC.GOV.

Routine inspections are carried out by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the agency's Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas at Susquehanna to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are radiation safety, emergency preparedness and the dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel.

Current performance information for Susquehanna 1 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SUSQ1/susq1_chart.html. Current performance information for Susquehanna 2 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SUSQ2/susq2_chart.html.

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