



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS URENCO USA PERFORMANCE AT MEETING IN EUNICE

Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials will meet with the management of URENCO USA in Eunice, N.M., on Tuesday, April 12 to discuss the results of a licensee performance review for the company's National Enrichment Facility in Eunice.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. MDT in the Eunice Community Center, 906 12th Street in Eunice. 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 about NRC oversight and inspection of the facility.

The NRC staff assessed operational performance and construction activities at the National Enrichment Facility during a period beginning Dec. 1, 2009, and ending Dec. 31, 2010.

Assessments were made in the areas of safety operations, radiological controls, facility support and special topics, and those evaluations will form the basis of the meeting discussion. The area of safeguards was also assessed, but that area will not be discussed publicly due to the sensitive nature of the information. Construction activities were evaluated in the areas of management measures, facility construction and facility support.

"We found that the facility is being operated safely and construction work is being done in an acceptable manner," said NRC Region II Administrator Victor McCree. "While we did not identify any areas needing improvement, we do plan to continue increased inspection in some areas."

The NRC inspectors found indications of potential weaknesses in the company's criticality safety program, and the NRC will perform additional inspections in 2011 to ensure adequate corrective actions. A criticality can occur when enriched uranium comes together in sufficient quantity or in a container of a shape that initiates a chain reaction resulting in either a "burst" or a sustained release of radiation.

During the review period, the NRC also identified some non-compliance issues related to the quality assurance oversight of some construction activities. While the company has taken corrective actions to address these issues, the NRC will continue increased inspection oversight in this area.

A copy of the NRC letter detailing the URENCO USA 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. That document references Louisiana Energy Services, L.L.C., which is the company name on the original NRC license for the URENCO USA facility in Eunice. The ML number for that letter is ML110680220.

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