



NRC NEWS

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NRC, PSE&G TO DISCUSS EMERGENCY PLANNING CONCERN REGARDING SALEM NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) Co. officials on Friday, February 4, to discuss an inspection finding involving emergency preparedness at the Salem nuclear power plant. PSE&G operates the plant, which is located in Hancocks Bridge, N.J.

The regulatory conference, scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. in the Public Meeting Room at the NRC Region I office in King of Prussia, Pa., will be open to the public for observation. NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public following the meeting.

Salem is taking part in a pilot program for a new NRC reactor oversight process. There are 13 plants at nine sites nationwide participating in the program. Under the program, performance indicators and inspection findings can range from "green," which is the least significant, to "red," which is the most significant. Intermediate categories are "white" and "yellow." The NRC's response is commensurate with those indicators and findings.

Based on an inspection completed on November 28, the NRC reported a "white" finding and an apparent violation at Salem involving ineffective corrective actions in the emergency preparedness area. The finding has low to moderate safety significance.

Specifically, on December 8, 1998, Salem Unit 2 had an event that was declared as an Unusual Event but in an untimely manner. (The NRC uses four levels of emergency classification, with Unusual Event the least serious and General Emergency the most serious.) Even though this late declaration was cited as a violation by the NRC last February 12, effective corrective actions were not taken to prevent recurrence. Indeed, on September 8, Salem Unit 1 reactor coolant was inadvertently discharged into radioactive waste systems at a rate that apparently met the level for an Unusual Event. However, an Unusual Event was not declared in a timely manner.

The purpose of the regulatory conference is to discuss the concern about ineffective emergency response and its causes, the proposed "white" categorization and the apparent violation. PSE&G will be provided with an opportunity to clarify aspects of the NRC inspection report, as necessary, and to outline its proposed corrective action.

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