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NRC EXTENDS TRIAL PROGRAM FOR OPEN ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has decided to extend the two-year trial period for opening to the public certain NRC meetings at which apparent violations of agency regulations are discussed with licensees. The trial program for open enforcement conferences will continue while an NRC team completes a broad review of the NRC's enforcement program.

Enforcement conferences have historically been closed. Under the trial program, selected enforcement conferences are open to the public for observation, but not participation. The program began on July 10, 1992, and was scheduled to end in two years.

The purpose of the trial program is to determine whether to maintain the current policy, which is that enforcement conferences are not normally open to the public, or adopt a new policy that would allow most enforcement conferences to be open to attendance by all members of the public.

Approximately 25 percent of all eligible enforcement conferences are open under the trial program. Conferences that are not eligible for opening include those involving possible action against an individual or significant personnel failure where the staff has requested that the individuals involved be present. Also ineligible are conferences based on an NRC Office of Investigations report or involving safeguards information, Privacy Act information or other information that could be considered proprietary.

As part of its broad enforcement policy review, the NRC plans to issue a Federal Register notice seeking public comments to assist the review team. The notice will specifically seek comments on the issue of open enforcement conferences.

In the meantime, open enforcement conferences will continue to be announced 10 days in advance. Recorded information on upcoming open enforcement conferences also will be available by calling 1-800-952-9674.

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