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NRC ISSUES FINAL POLICY ON MEETINGS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; BEGINS
TOLL-FREE TELEPHONE RECORDING AND BULLETIN BOARD SERVICE
TO ANNOUNCE PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission, in a move aimed at increasing public access to official meetings with NRC personnel, has adopted a new policy. Hereafter, when the purpose of such sessions is to discuss substantive issues bearing on the NRC's regulatory and safety responsibilities, with a few specified exceptions, they are to be open meetings.

At the same time, the NRC is establishing a toll-free telephone recording and bulletin board service to inform interested parties of upcoming public meetings throughout the United States.

The new policy represents an evolution of a trend toward ever greater public scrutiny of NRC's regulatory activities since an earlier policy statement on open meetings in 1978.

The new policy includes meetings with licensees on technical issues, with licensee senior management on Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance reports, and with licensees on exit meetings for special team inspections or by accident investigation and diagnostic evaluation teams. In addition, NRC has open meetings with trade organizations and with public interest groups regarding policy and technical issues and the agency's regulatory responsibilities.

Meetings between NRC persons and outside staff will be classified as public meetings unless the NRC staff determines that the subject matter to be discussed--

- a. Is specifically authorized by an Executive Order to be kept secret in the interests of national defense or foreign policy (classified information) or specifically exempted from public disclosure by statute;
- b. Contains trade secrets and commercial or financial information (proprietary information);

- c. Contains safeguards information;
- d. Is of a personal nature where public disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- e. Is related to a planned, ongoing or completed investigation and/or contains information compiled for law enforcement purposes;
- f. Could result in the inappropriate disclosure and dissemination of preliminary, unverified information;
- g. Is a general information exchange having no direct, substantive connection to a specific NRC regulatory decision or action;
- h. Indicates that the administrative burden associated with public attendance at the meeting could result in interfering with the NRC staff's execution of its safety and regulatory responsibilities such as when the meeting is an integral part of the execution of the NRC inspection program.

Whether or not a meeting should be open to the public is dependent primarily on the subject matter to be discussed, not who outside nor who within the NRC staff is participating (i.e., staff level versus senior management).

The toll-free telephone recording and bulletin board will include information on the date, time and location of the meeting, its purpose, the NRC staff offices and outside organizations in attendance and the name and telephone number of the agency contact for the meeting. Information about cancelled or rescheduled meetings will be updated as necessary.

The recording and bulletin board will cover public meetings scheduled during the next 60 calendar days and new meetings will be added weekly. In addition, a weekly listing will be posted in the NRC headquarter's Public Document Room at 2120 L street (Lower Level) NW., Washington, DC, and the Office of Public Affairs will continue to issue public announcements on the more significant meetings.

The toll-free telephone recording for meeting information is 1-800-952-9674. The telephone number for the electronic bulletin board is 1-800-303-9672. Both numbers will be available as of November 1.