

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
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**NRC STAFF TO MEET JUNE 18 WITH CONSUMERS ENERGY CO. TO DISCUSS
INSPECTION FINDINGS ON SPENT FUEL CASK ISSUES AT PALISADES**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet June 18 in Benton Harbor, Michigan, with representatives of Consumers Energy Co. to discuss the findings of an NRC inspection of the unloading procedure for spent fuel storage casks at the Palisades Nuclear Plant and other cask issues. The Palisades plant is located near South Haven, Michigan.

The meeting will include a period for comments and questions by members of the public.

The meeting will be from 6 to 9 p.m. in Hanson Theater, Mendel Center for the Arts and Technology, Lake Michigan College, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor.

The NRC staff will discuss the results of a special team inspection that included a detailed examination of the Palisades dry spent fuel storage cask unloading procedure and changes in the operating procedures as a result of a hydrogen burn during cask loading at a plant in Wisconsin.

The Palisades plant uses the VSC-24 dry cask storage system. Thirteen casks have been loaded and placed on a storage pad at the plant site. Other fuel remains in the spent fuel storage pool at the plant.

The inspection began in 1996 to review the cask unloading procedure. It was not completed until earlier this year as a result of the hydrogen gas burn which occurred during welding of the lid of a cask at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Station in Wisconsin.

The NRC issued a bulletin in 1996 to all spent fuel cask users directing them to evaluate the materials used in the casks and any changes in procedures which were necessary to prevent buildup of combustible gases. The NRC inspection at Palisades was expanded to include the utility's response to the bulletin.

A written inspection report will be issued several weeks after the June 18 meeting.