



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO MEET WITH PG&E, PUBLIC ON SAFETY CONSCIOUS WORK ENVIRONMENT AT DIABLO CANYON

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a public meeting Friday, May 19, with officials of Pacific Gas & Electric Co., operators of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, to discuss the safety conscious work environment at the plant and review an independent survey assessing the plant's safety culture.

The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 333 Madonna Rd., San Luis Obispo.

The meeting with PG&E will be open to public observation. It will be followed at 7:30 p.m. by a public participation meeting during which NRC Region IV Administrator Ellis W. Merschoff will take questions or comments from the news media and members of the public. Members of the public who wish to speak should sign up at the beginning of the meeting.

The NRC expects all nuclear power plant licensees to maintain a work environment in which employees feel free to bring forward safety concerns without fear of retaliation. These meetings are being held, in part, to discuss actions PG&E is taking in the wake of events surrounding former PG&E employee Mr. Neil J. Aiken. Mr. Aiken brought safety issues to the attention of the NRC beginning in 1996, was denied plant access following fitness for duty evaluations in 1998 and subsequently complained of retaliatory treatment by PG&E to NRC and the Department of Labor.

The Agency is concerned that the circumstances of the Aiken case could have a detrimental effect on the safety conscious work environment at Diablo Canyon. To address these concerns, the NRC has asked PG&E management what positive steps it is taking to assure that all employees understand the importance of bringing forward safety issues and make clear that no one will be adversely affected in their jobs for doing so.

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