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NRC TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS JUNE 26 AND 27 ON CHANGES IN REACTOR OVERSIGHT AND LATEST ASSESSMENT OF MONTICELLO NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold two public meetings in Monticello, Minnesota, to discuss, on June 26, the NRC's reactor oversight process and, on June 27, the latest performance review results for the Monticello Nuclear Power Plant. The plant is operated by Northern States Power Co.

The June 26 meeting will begin at 7 p.m. CDT in the Monticello Community Center Bridge Room, 505 Walnut Street #4. NRC officials will describe the new oversight program which began in April. Members of the public will have the opportunity to ask questions during the meeting.

The new oversight program uses more objective, timely, and safety-significant criteria in assessing performance, while seeking to more effectively and efficiently regulate the industry. It also takes into account improvements in the performance of the nuclear industry over the past twenty years.

Under the new oversight program, inspections by NRC resident inspectors and regional office-based personnel are supplemented by statistical measures of plant activities called performance indicators. These performance indicators measure important safety aspects of plant operations, including the viability of redundant safety systems, emergency planning, radiation protection, and security measures.

Inspection findings and performance indicators for each nuclear power plant are posted on the NRC's internet web site every three months. The safety significance of each inspection finding or performance indicator is assessed with a color coding -- green, white, yellow, or red.

The NRC response to the inspection findings and performance indicators will be based on the assessment. A green finding would receive normal NRC oversight, while white, yellow or red assessments would receive increasing NRC involvement. Multiple red findings could result in a plant shutdown.

The second NRC public meeting will be held at 1 p.m. CDT Tuesday, June 27, at the Monticello Power Plant's Training Center, 2100 W. River Street. During the meeting, NRC staff members will discuss Monticello's latest plant performance review results.

The Plant Performance Reviews (PPRs) are an interim measure the NRC has used to assess nuclear power plant safety while a reactor oversight process was being developed. The primary purpose of the PPRs is to evaluate safety performance information and identify any changes in plant performance so the NRC can allocate inspection resources appropriately. The text of each PPR letter, including the one on Monticello, is available from the NRC Office of Public Affairs and has been posted at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/ppr> on the NRC web site.

Current performance information for the Monticello Nuclear Power Plant is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/MONT/mont_chart.html

A plain language summary of the new reactor oversight process is available from the NRC Office of Public Affairs or on the web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/primer.htm>

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