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NRC TO MEET WITH EXELON TO DISCUSS REGULATORY SAFETY ISSUES AT BRAIDWOOD

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Exelon Generation Company, on Wednesday, December 4, to discuss two safety performance concerns, which resulted in Braidwood's entering what the agency describes as a "degraded" cornerstone. The two-unit reactor is located near Braidwood, Illinois.

The meeting will be held at 10:30 p.m. CST at the Fossil Ridge Public Library, 386 West John F. Kennedy Road, in Braidwood. The public is invited to observe the meeting and will have an opportunity to make comments and ask questions of the NRC staff before the meeting is adjourned.

The meeting will focus on two "white" performance issues, of low to moderate safety significance, which resulted in the "degradation" of the Mitigating Systems cornerstone, and on the utility's actions to correct these problems. The first issue concerns two component failures in Braidwood's Unit 1 auxiliary feedwater system during the last quarter of 2001.

The other issue involved a failure to take adequate corrective action for valve problems affecting the functioning of a plant safety system which would control reactor pressure under certain accident conditions. (This finding is described in an NRC Press Release dated July 25 and Inspection Report 50456/02-03.)

The NRC uses a performance-based regulatory safety inspection program, which utilizes a color-coded scale of increasing levels of safety significance, beginning with "green" and progressing to "white," "yellow" or "red." The oversight process uses performance indicators submitted by nuclear power plants and findings from NRC's inspections to evaluate each plant's safety performance. These findings fall into seven specific areas, or "cornerstones," which are key indicators of the safety of plant operations. When the regulatory process identifies two "white" issues in the same cornerstone, this cornerstone is considered "degraded." Having a "degraded" cornerstone is not an indication that the plant is unsafe, but it does result in heightened regulatory attention.

Documents on Braidwood's performance, including inspection reports and correspondence, are posted to the NRC's web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections>. Help in using the web site is available from the NRC Public Document Room staff at 301/415-4737 or 1-800-397-4209.

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