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NRC, PSEG TO DISCUSS LICENSING EXAMS FOR HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT OPERATORS

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of PSEG Nuclear on Wednesday, November 5, to discuss the results of licensing examinations given to control room operator candidates for the Hope Creek nuclear power plant earlier this year. The plant is located in Hancocks Bridge (Salem County), N.J., and operated by PSEG Nuclear.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. in the Public Meeting Room at the NRC Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. It will be open for public observation and members of the public will have an opportunity to pose questions to NRC staff members prior to adjournment.

In June, candidates for six senior reactor operator licenses and three reactor operator licenses for the Hope Creek plant were administered initial licensing examinations. PSEG gave the written portion of the exams while the NRC was responsible for conducting operating tests, which took place in a plant simulator and during plant walk-throughs. Following the testing, PSEG asked for changes to 10 of the more than 125 items that made up the written exams. For example, the company stated that two of the questions had two correct answers and that in four instances the answers needed basic changes or corrections.

The NRC staff is concerned that the changes indicate a problem with the quality of the written exams, particularly since the number of post-exam changes -- both for these tests and the previous round of tests -- exceeds criteria established in examination standards used by the agency.

At the meeting on Nov. 5, the NRC staff plans to discuss this issue with PSEG representatives as well as any corrective actions taken by the company in response.

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