



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO MEET WITH NUCLEAR MANAGEMENT COMPANY TO DISCUSS PERFORMANCE OF POINT BEACH NUCLEAR PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Nuclear Management Company on Wednesday, April 21, to discuss the results of the agency's assessment of safety performance at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Plant during 2003. The facility, which has two reactors, is located near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

The meeting will be held at 7 p.m. in the Holiday Inn, 4601 Calumet Avenue, Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The public is invited to observe the meeting, and NRC officials will be available before the conclusion of the meeting to answer questions from the public. In addition, the NRC staff will provide an overview of how the agency's Reactor Oversight Process works.

The NRC has concluded that the plant operated safely last year. The plant, however, remains under increased NRC oversight because of problems with the auxiliary feedwater system which were identified during 2001 and 2002. The auxiliary feedwater system is used to safely cool the reactor if problems occur during plant operations and to continue removing heat from the reactor after shutdown.

While the specific problems with the auxiliary feedwater system were corrected, the NRC found that some of the utility's broader corrective actions were incomplete and of inconsistent quality.

During the year, NRC inspectors identified a number of instances where human performance contributed to problems at the plant. In addition, the NRC found that when problems were found by the utility, the evaluation and resolution of those problems was inconsistent, resulting in a recurrence of the problems.

From July through December of last year, the NRC conducted an intensive inspection of operations, engineering, corrective actions, and emergency preparedness at Point Beach. The report of this inspection was issued February 4, and, on February 20 the NRC's Executive Director for Operations and the Region III Regional Administrator held a public meeting with utility officials to discuss the inspection findings and the NRC's evaluation of Point Beach's performance.

Also in February, Nuclear Management Company submitted its plans for improving human performance, corrective actions, engineering and other activities at the plant. These plans are currently under review by the NRC.

During inspections planned for this year, the NRC will continue its expanded oversight of the Point Beach to review the effectiveness of corrective actions being taken by the utility in the areas of human performance, problem identification and resolution, emergency preparedness, and engineering. In addition, routine inspections will be performed by the two NRC resident inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from Region III office in Lisle, Illinois.

A March 4 letter from the NRC to Nuclear Management Co. officials addresses the performance of the plant during 2003 and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/poin_2003q4.pdf

With regard to security issues, the NRC has issued several orders and threat advisories to enhance security capabilities and improve guard force readiness since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The agency has also conducted inspections to review the implementation of these requirements and has monitored the action of plant operators in response to changing threat conditions. The NRC will continue security inspections during 2004.

Current performance indicators and inspection findings for Point Beach are available on the NRC web site at: (Unit 1) http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/POIN1/poin1_chart.html and (Unit 2) http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/POIN2/poin2_chart.html

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