



NRC NEWS

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2004 PERFORMANCE AT OCONEE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is scheduled to meet with Duke Energy officials April 27 to discuss the NRC's annual assessment of safety performance at the Oconee nuclear power plant, located near Seneca, S.C. The period covered is the calendar year 2004.

The 3:00 p.m. meeting at the Oconee Complex Building Auditorium, 155 East Pickens Highway (Hwy. 183) in Seneca is open to public observation. Before the meeting ends, NRC staff will be available to answer public questions on the plant's safety performance, as well as the agency's role in ensuring safe operation of the facility.

"Each year the NRC staff rates the performance of the Oconee plant and all of the nation's other commercial nuclear power plants," NRC Region II Administrator William Travers said. "This meeting gives us a chance to discuss our assessment with the company, with local officials and with residents near the plant. Our aim is to make this information available to the public and answer any questions people may have about our oversight."

Overall, the Oconee plant operated safely during 2004, but the NRC said the plant did have a "moderate degradation in safety performance." The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess performance. The colors start with "green" and increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

During the assessment period, the NRC had two "white" (low to moderate safety significance) inspection findings related to mitigating systems at the plant. These findings mean the NRC staff will conduct an additional inspection next month. The NRC continues to review several issues that may also result in additional inspections beyond the normal level if any of these issues are found to be of greater than very low risk significance.

In addition to routine inspections at the plant in 2005, the NRC plans operator licensing examinations, inspections of the plant's dry cask spent fuel storage, and inspections of pressurizer penetration nozzles and steam space piping connections.

The Oconee plant also received a \$60,000 fine during 2004 for the failure to obtain NRC approval before making a change to the plant involving unreviewed safety questions.

A letter sent from the NRC Region II Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during the period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the

NRC web site at www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/oco_2004q4.pdf .

Routine inspections are performed by NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by specialists from the Region II Office in Atlanta, and the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Md.

Current information for the Oconee plant is available on the NRC web site at:
www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/OCO1/oco1_chart.html ,
www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/OCO2/oco2_chart.html and
www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/OCO3/oco3_chart.html .

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