



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF APPROVES POWER UPRATE FOR VERMONT YANKEE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has approved a request by Entergy Nuclear to increase the generating capacity of Vermont Yankee by approximately 20 percent. The agency's review required more than two years and more than 11,000 staff-hours of effort. A related engineering inspection of the plant required an additional 900 hours of work. This is the most extensive uprate review conducted by the NRC to date.

The NRC staff reviewed Entergy's modifications to the plant's equipment and the company's analyses of the increase (or uprate), and performed independent calculations and evaluations, before determining Entergy could safely increase the reactor's power output. The NRC's approval includes several license conditions Entergy must comply with.

The power uprate for the unit, located in Vernon, Vt., will increase its generating capacity by approximately 100 megawatts electric. Under the conditions of the uprate, Entergy will increase Vermont Yankee's power level in small increments while NRC staff closely monitor the process until the higher power level is reached. The NRC staff will also continue to monitor and evaluate Vermont Yankee's performance in accordance with the agency's Reactor Oversight Process.

"The staff at Headquarters, our Region I office in Pennsylvania and the resident inspectors at the plant have thoroughly examined this uprate request," said Jim Dyer, Director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. "We've taken great care to identify and address technical concerns involved with safely operating the plant at increased power."

In July 2004, the NRC published a notice about the power uprate application in the *Federal Register*, and issued a press release on the notice, which provided the public an opportunity to comment or request a hearing. The Vermont Department of Public Service and the New England Coalition, a public interest group, filed hearing requests, and the Atomic Safety and Licensing Board granted those requests in November 2004. The ASLB has not set a hearing schedule yet, but the hearing is expected to start this summer.

On Jan. 11, 2006, the NRC issued a *Federal Register* notice seeking public comment regarding the staff's proposed determination that no significant safety considerations are associated with amending Vermont Yankee's license for the uprate. After evaluating the comments received, the staff has finalized that determination. Under NRC regulations, that determination allows the staff to issue the license amendment prior to the completion of any pending hearing.

The NRC's safety evaluation of the plant's proposed power uprate focused on several areas, including nuclear steam supply systems, instrumentation and control systems, electrical systems, accident evaluations, radiological consequences, operations, and technical specification changes. The staff's safety evaluation will be available through the NRC's electronic documents database, ADAMS, by entering accession number ML060050028 at this Web page: <http://adamswebsearch.nrc.gov/dologin.htm> .

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