



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.

www.nrc.gov

No. I-06-051

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September 7, 2006

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CLOSURE OF SAFETY CONSCIOUS WORK ENVIRONMENT ISSUE AT SALEM AND HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR PLANTS TO BE SUBJECT OF SEPT. 14TH OPEN HOUSE

NRC staff will hold an open house session on Thursday, Sept. 14, to discuss the process followed by the agency as it evaluated whether a regulatory performance concern involving Safety Conscious Work Environment had been adequately addressed at the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear power plants.

The NRC in 2004 identified Safety Conscious Work Environment as a substantive cross-cutting issue, or an issue that affects multiple areas of plant performance, for the site, which is located in Hancocks Bridge (Salem County), N.J. In the NRC's Aug. 31st Mid-Cycle (or mid-year) Assessment letters for the PSEG-owned plants, the agency stated that the issue was being closed out based on "substantial, sustainable" progress confirmed through inspections and assessment results.

The Sept. 14th open house session is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. at the Hampton Inn, 429 North Broadway in Pennsville, N.J. NRC staff will be available to discuss, on an informal basis, the process by which the agency reviewed and evaluated the area of Safety Conscious Work Environment.

"This is an opportunity for the public to engage our staff in discussions about the numerous inspections we performed and the kinds of information we gathered before we arrived at our decision," NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. "Unlike traditional meetings where the audience waits for its turn to weigh in with questions, this session will be devoted entirely to an exchange of information between agency staff and members of the public."

In the NRC's 2004 Mid-Cycle Assessment letters for Salem and Hope Creek, the agency said it had identified a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of Safety Conscious Work Environment. The NRC staff said this finding was based on numerous indications of weaknesses in corrective actions and management efforts to establish an environment in which employees were consistently willing to raise safety concerns. That finding led the NRC to devote additional resources to the facility to determine if those issues were being adequately and appropriately addressed. On multiple occasions, the NRC said the issue would not be closed out until there was evidence of "substantial, sustainable" progress toward improving the work environment for raising safety issues.

An NRC inspection report dated July 31 and the 2006 Mid-Cycle Assessment letter state that such progress has been achieved. Therefore, the plants will now receive oversight that consists of baseline, or routine, inspections. The Mid-Cycle Assessment letter for the Hope Creek plant is available at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/hope_2006q2.pdf . The Mid-Cycle Assessment letter for the Salem units is available at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/salm_2006q2.pdf .

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