



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2006 ASSESSMENT FOR INDIAN POINT NUCLEAR PLANT AT PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 26

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual assessment of safety performance at the Indian Point nuclear power plant, in Buchanan (Westchester County), N.Y., will be the subject of a public meeting on Thursday, April 26.

NRC staff will meet with representatives of plant owner Entergy Nuclear Northeast at 6:30 p.m. to discuss plant performance and the annual assessment, which covers the period from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2006, and was documented in a March 2nd letter to the company. The session will take place at the Colonial Terrace, 119 Oregon Road in Cortlandt Manor, N.Y. (Directions to the facility are available at: http://www.colonialterracecaterers.com/ct_map.html.) Attendees are advised that parking may be limited.

Before the meeting is adjourned, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the performance of the two-reactor Indian Point plant, as well as the role of the NRC in providing oversight of plant safety.

In conjunction with that meeting, the NRC will conduct an informational open house at the same facility from 2:30 to 9:30 p.m. on the same day. It will provide an opportunity for members of the public to discuss topics related to Indian Point with NRC staffers in an informal manner. Representatives of Entergy, state regulators and several citizen groups will also likely be available at the open house.

"Each year we take a step back to size up plant performance during the previous calendar year, with the overarching goal of ensuring that facilities are achieving the levels of safety that are essential to protecting the public and the environment," said NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins, who noted the agency also conducts mid-year assessments of performance. "At the meeting on April 26th, members of the public will receive information about how we go about that review process for Indian Point and other nuclear power plants across the nation. The NRC staff will also be prepared to answer questions from attendees, both during the regular meeting and during the informational open house."

The annual assessment letter for Indian Point is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/inpt_2006q4.pdf . The notice for the meeting, with agenda attached, is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML071000060. ADAMS is accessible at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> . Help in using ADAMS is available via the NRC's Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR@NRC.GOV .

Overall, the Indian Point Unit 2 and 3 plants operated safely during 2006. The NRC utilizes color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear power plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

At the conclusion of 2006, all of the performance indicators for the Indian Point 2 were determined to be "green" and there were no inspection findings greater than "green." However, Indian Point 2 did have a "white" (low to moderate safety significance) inspection finding open during the first quarter of 2006. The finding involved degradation of the unit's safety injection system over a period of several weeks in late 2004 and early 2005. The NRC completed a supplemental inspection in response to this finding in December 2005 and determined that steps to prevent a recurrence had been effective. That led to a closure of the finding in the first quarter of 2006.

Indian Point 3 also had all "green" performance indicators and no inspection findings that were greater than "green" at the end of last year. However, the unit recently exceeded a threshold in the performance indicator for unplanned shutdowns. The threshold is crossed when a reactor has more than three unplanned shutdowns per 7,000 hours of operation. Consequently, the indicator will change from "green" to "white" and Indian Point 3 will receive additional oversight in 2007 via a supplemental inspection. The letter sent by the NRC to Entergy on April 13 notifying the company of the change is available in ADAMS under accession number ML071030272.

Above and beyond the NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, enhanced oversight remains in effect for Indian Point in response to issues associated with the installation of a new siren system for the plant as well as groundwater contamination issues at the site. That oversight is made possible by a deviation from the Reactor Oversight Process that was first approved by the agency's Executive Director for Operations on Oct. 31, 2005.

In addition, the NRC plans to monitor progress in two areas through baseline, or routine, inspections during 2007. The agency has identified a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of human performance at Indian Point 2. Specifically, there were seven inspection findings involving procedure inadequacy at the unit in 2006. Also, the NRC will be checking on Entergy's progress toward addressing issues related to the site's safety conscious environment, that is, the willingness of plant employees to raise safety concerns. This issue was raised by the NRC to the company in a letter sent on Dec. 21, 2006. Entergy responded on Jan. 22, 2007, with its corrective action plans and the NRC, in a response on Feb. 26, 2007, found those activities to be appropriate. Nevertheless, the NRC will be following up on the company's efforts through the baseline inspection program.

Routine inspections are performed by four NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant – two for each unit – and by inspection specialists from the Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas of plant performance to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are activities associated with the construction of a dry cask storage facility for spent nuclear fuel at the site, fire protection, radiological protection and emergency preparedness.

Current performance information for Indian Point Unit 2 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/IP2/ip2_chart.html .

Current performance information for Indian Point Unit 3 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/IP3/ip3_chart.html .

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