



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2006 ASSESSMENT FOR BEAVER VALLEY NUCLEAR PLANT AT PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 25

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual assessment of safety performance at the Beaver Valley nuclear power plant, in Shippingport (Beaver County), Pa., will be the subject of a public meeting on Wednesday, April 25.

NRC staff will meet with representatives of plant owner FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Co. at 2:30 p.m. to discuss the 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 in Conference Room A at the Site Emergency Response Facility for the plant, which is located on Shippingport Road in Shippingport, Pa.

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

"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 25th, members of the public will receive information about how we go about that review process for Beaver Valley and other nuclear power plants across the nation. The NRC staff will also be prepared to answer questions from attendees."

The annual assessment letter for Beaver Valley is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/bv_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 ML070851215. 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 Beaver Valley plant 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 last year, all of the performance indicators for Beaver Valley were determined to be “green.” With one exception, there were no inspection findings for the plant that were identified as greater than “green” at that time.

There was a “white” (low to moderate safety significance) inspection finding in the area of emergency preparedness that was finalized on Dec. 12, 2006 and that remains open. That finding involves an inadequacy in the way radioactive releases from the plant would be calculated, potentially resulting in untimely recommendations on protective actions for the public. In response, the NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection at the plant sometime in 2007 to determine if the problem has been properly addressed.

In addition, the NRC issued a Severity Level III Notice of Violation to FirstEnergy on Dec. 19, 2006 associated with the preparation of a work package that was to be used for the replacement of the Beaver Valley Unit 1 reactor vessel head last year. Specifically, a contract engineer did not attach all of the necessary evaluations for the project but signed a document indicating the package was complete. The Notice of Violation was part of an agreement reached with the company during an Alternate Dispute Resolution session that also led to an order confirming actions FirstEnergy had taken to prevent a recurrence. All documents involved have been corrected. The NRC now considers the issue resolved.

Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas of performance at Beaver Valley to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are activities associated with Extended Power Uprates for both reactors at the site, Unit 1 containment sump modifications, radiological safety and the plant’s problem identification and resolution program.

Current performance information for Beaver Valley Unit 1 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BV1/bv1_chart.html .

Current performance information for Beaver Valley Unit 2 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BV2/bv2_chart.html .

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