



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2006 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR BRAIDWOOD NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Exelon Generation Co. on Tuesday, May 22, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Braidwood Nuclear Power Plant. The plant is located near Braidwood, Ill.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. at the Reed-Custer High School Auditorium, 249 Comet Dr., in Braidwood. The NRC staff will present the results of the assessment and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Braidwood plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region III Administrator James Caldwell said. "This meeting will provide an opportunity for a discussion of our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and with local officials and residents who live near the plant. Our goal is to explain the NRC oversight process and make as much information as possible available to the public regarding our regulation of these facilities."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III 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: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/brai_2006q4.pdf.

The NRC's assessment concluded that, overall, the Braidwood plant operated safely during the period. The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

There was one "white" finding of low-to-moderate significance in the area of public radiation safety. The finding was due to the utility's multiple failures to properly evaluate the radiological impacts of unplanned releases from a pipe which goes from the Braidwood Plant to the Kankakee River. However, it was not based on the radiological impact to public health. The NRC estimated the doses from the contamination to be a small fraction of the NRC's limit for doses to members of the public.

The NRC conducted multiple inspections to characterize and evaluate the tritium contamination on plant property and in the public domain when the contamination was discovered.

In early 2007, the NRC conducted an extensive follow-up inspection to make sure that the utility understood the causes of the issue; identified the extent of the problem; and took appropriate corrective actions to prevent the issue from recurring. NRC inspectors found the utility's efforts in all these areas satisfactory. The inspection report can be accessed through the NRC's electronic document system at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>; enter "ML070660063" as a search term.

During 2007, the NRC plans to conduct routine baseline inspections at the Braidwood Station.

Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Md. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are problem identification and resolution; radiological environmental monitoring program and radioactive material control; access control to radiologically significant areas; and processing and transportation of radioactive material.

Current performance information for Braidwood is available on the NRC's web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BRAI1/brai1_chart.html and http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BRAI2/brai2_chart.html.

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