



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2007 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR PALISADES NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Entergy Nuclear Operations on Monday, May 12, to discuss the agency's assessment of the safety performance during 2007 at the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant. The plant is located in Covert, Mich.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. EDT at Lake Michigan College, 125 Veteran Boulevard, in South Haven. The NRC staff will present the results of the assessment, talk about the NRC and its range of activities, and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public about the NRC's oversight before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Palisades plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region III Administrator James Caldwell said. "This meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and with local officials and area residents. Our goal is to explain how the NRC works and make sure as much information as possible is available on our regulation of these facilities."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III Office to plant officials addresses Palisades' performance 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/listofasmrpt.html>.

The NRC's assessment concluded that the Palisades 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.

All performance indicators for Palisades during 2007 were determined to be "green." Performance indicators are a statistical measurement of plant and equipment performance.

There was one finding in the area of plant security which was greater than “green,” meaning it had greater than very low significance to safety. The details of this finding, as is the case with all findings in the area of plant security, cannot be publically discussed because of national security considerations.

The NRC letter addressed a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of human performance at the Palisades plant. The NRC refers to performance deficiencies that affect multiple areas of plant operations as “substantive cross-cutting issues.” Examples of cross-cutting issues include weaknesses with a plant staff’s ability to identify and correct problems and the staff’s ability to develop effective procedures and adhere to these procedures. These issues cannot be quantified and are not assigned safety significance. When a substantive cross-cutting issue is identified at a nuclear power plant, the NRC expects the problem to be corrected.

At Palisades, the substantive cross-cutting issue relates to the utility’s failure to use proper error prevention techniques. The plant has initiated actions to improve performance. This cross-cutting issue will remain open until the number of findings associated with human performance decreases or the NRC develops confidence that the utility has effectively addressed the issue.

Based on this performance, the NRC will conduct the normal, baseline level of inspections during the upcoming year. In addition, the NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection in the area of plant security.

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. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are problem identification and resolution, radiation protection, and engineering design.

Current performance information for Palisades is available on the NRC’s web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/PALI/pali_chart.html.

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