



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2007 PERFORMANCE OF FARLEY NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is scheduled to meet with Southern Nuclear Operating Company officials in Dothan, Ala., on Thursday, May 22, to discuss the NRC's annual assessment of safety performance for 2007 at the Farley nuclear power plant, located near Columbia, Ala.

The meeting, which is open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m. in the County Commissioners Chambers of the Houston County Administration Building, located at 462 North Oats St., in Dothan. 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 Farley plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region II Administrator Luis Reyes said. "This meeting is a chance for us to discuss that safety performance with the company, with local officials and with people living near the plant."

A letter sent from the NRC Region II 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 www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/far_2007q4.pdf.

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," depending on the safety significance of the issues involved.

The NRC said the Farley plant operated safely during 2007 but experienced a "moderate degradation" in safety performance. NRC officials said this was because a Unit 1 cooling water systems Performance Indicator moved from "green" to "white" in the third quarter of 2007 due to the failure of component cooling water system pump breakers on two separate occasions, resulting in an NRC Augmented Inspection Team inspection. Also, a "white" performance indicator inspection finding on Units 1 and 2 was identified during the third quarter due to continuing problems with the plant's evaluation of safety-related breaker failures, identified as a

result of an NRC Supplemental Inspection of the cooling water system performance indicator concerns which moved from “green” to white” during the second quarter of 2006. This change resulted in Unit 1 receiving more NRC oversight.

Unit 2 received a “yellow” finding during the third quarter of 2007 in the “mitigating systems cornerstone” due to failure of a residual heat removal system (RHR) containment sump suction valve not fully opening during testing upon two separate occasions, resulting in an NRC Special Inspection, and causing the NRC to increase the level of oversight for Unit 2. In addition, the Unit 2 RHR system Performance Indicator moved from “green” to “white” in the second quarter of 2007.

As a result of the plant's overall performance, the NRC plans to continue routine baseline inspections at the plant for the rest of 2008 and will also conduct a supplemental inspection for Units 1 and 2. The NRC will conduct an additional Identification and Resolution of Problems inspection during the current biennial period in accordance with the agency's Reactor Oversight Process. Routine inspections are performed by NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by specialists from the Region II Office in Atlanta, and the agency's headquarters in Rockville, Md.

Current information for the Farley plant is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/FAR1/far1_chart.html and www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/FAR2/far2_chart.html .

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