



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2007 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR POINT BEACH NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of FPL Energy Point Beach, LLC Wednesday, July 16, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Plant. The plant is located in Two Rivers, Wisc.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. CDT at the Two Creeks Town Hall, 5128 East Tapawingo Road, in Two Creeks. 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 before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Point Beach 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 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/poin_2007q4.pdf

The NRC's assessment concluded that the Point Beach Plant Unit 1 and 2 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.

Last year the NRC's resident inspectors spent roughly 2,000 hours examining plant operations and determined that the plant met the NRC's demanding standards. All the rating areas for Point Beach were "green." Because of the plant's performance in 2007, the plant will again

receive 2,000 hours of inspection and oversight. However, should NRC inspectors spot a degradation in plant performance, the facility would be subject to additional inspection and oversight in the future.

The NRC letter to the utility addressed two substantive cross-cutting issues in the areas of human performance and problem identification and resolution at the Point Beach plant. Cross-cutting issues are those that affect several areas of plant performance.

The first cross-cutting issue is in the area of human performance. These problems were associated with not having complete, accurate, and up-to-date design documentation and procedures. The NRC is concerned with the progress and efforts given to address these issues and has requested the utility to discuss them during the meeting.

The second cross-cutting issue is in the area of problem identification and resolution. The NRC letter noted a declining trend with the company's ability to identify and resolve problems. The plant's own assessments of the corrective action program identified continued improvement was needed in this area. NRC inspectors will continue to monitor the issue until confidence is developed that the utility has effectively addressed this area.

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. In addition to routine inspections, the NRC will continue to assess the cross-cutting issues at the plant. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are emergency preparedness, radiation protection, and reactor system operations.

Current performance information for Point Beach is available on the NRC's web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/POIN1/poin1_chart.html (Unit 1) and http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/POIN2/poin2_chart.html (Unit 2).

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