



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2008 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR POINT BEACH NUCLEAR POWER PLANT APRIL 29

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold two public meetings with representatives of NextEra Energy Resources (formerly FPL Energy) Wednesday, April 29, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Plant. The plant has two reactors located in Two Creeks, Wis.

The first meeting is scheduled to begin at 1:00 p.m. CDT at the Point Beach Energy Center, 6610 Nuclear Rd., Two Creeks. The second meeting will begin at 6 p.m. CDT at the Two Creeks Town Hall, 5128 East Tapawingo Rd. The first meeting will focus on actions taken by the utility to improve the status of human performance and identification resolution issues at the plant. During the second meeting NRC staff will present the results of the annual assessment, talk about the NRC and its range of activities and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public. Also, the utility will provide a summary of issues discussed at the 1 p.m. 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 Mark Satorius said. "This meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and area residents. One of NRC's main goals is to explain to people in the community how the agency regulates nuclear power plants."

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_2008q4.pdf.

The NRC found that the Point Beach nuclear plant met all NRC safety objectives during 2008, and performance at both units was at a level that resulted in no additional NRC oversight. 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 and inspection findings for Point Beach during 2008 were determined to be “green.” Performance indicators are a statistical measurement of plant and equipment performance.

The NRC assessment letter addressed two substantive cross-cutting issues. The first issue is in the area of human performance; the second issue is in the area of problem identification and resolution. Cross-cutting issues are issues that affect or “cut across” multiple areas of plant operation. 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 Point Beach, the substantive cross-cutting issues relate to the utility’s failure to have adequate procedures and the ability to take appropriate actions to correct issues in a timely manner. The plant has implemented a plan to address these issues. Even though some progress has been made, actions have not yet proven to be effective. As stated in the NRC assessment letter cross-cutting issues which have been identified for three and four consecutive quarters need to be discussed by the utility in a public forum. In response to the NRC’s request the utility will discuss these issues at both meetings.

The NRC also requested that an independent assessment of corrective actions be performed in the areas of human performance and problem identification and resolution. The NRC plans on inspecting the utility’s actions to address the substantial cross-cutting issues this year and review the independent assessment. Point Beach will also continue to receive the detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for plants that require no additional oversight. 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 emergency preparedness and engineering modifications.

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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