



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS NFS PERFORMANCE AT PUBLIC MEETING IN ERWIN

Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials will meet with management of Nuclear Fuel Services in Erwin, Tenn., on Thursday, April 7 to discuss the results of a licensee performance review for the company's nuclear fuel facility in Erwin.

The meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m. in the Circuit Court Room on the second floor of the Unicoi County Courthouse, 100 Main St. in Erwin. The meeting will be open to members of the public and the news media. NRC officials will open the meeting with a brief presentation on the company's performance, and then be available to answer questions about NRC oversight and inspection of the facility.

The NRC staff assessed performance at NFS during a period beginning Jan. 7, 2010, and ending Dec. 31, 2010, in the areas of safety operations, radiological controls, facility support and special topics, and those evaluations will form the basis of the meeting discussion. The area of safeguards was also assessed, but that area will not be discussed publicly due to the sensitive nature of the information. The NRC staff review determined that NFS continued to conduct its activities safely and securely, protecting the public, workers and the environment.

"We found that NFS is operating the facility safely, but the NRC identified two areas needing continued focus and improvement," said NRC Region II Administrator Victor McCree. "This meeting allows us to discuss those areas and overall safety performance with company officials and interested people in the area."

Based on NRC inspections in 2010, the agency found that NFS improved performance but corrective actions to address the underlying causes of some operational issues have not been fully effective and the area of safety operations continues to need improvement.

In addition, NRC inspectors found that additional effort by NFS management is needed to improve oversight of facility operations.

At the start of the current review period, the NRC issued a Confirmatory Action Letter that required the facility to remain shut down until some improvements outlined in the letter were put into place and evaluated by NRC inspectors. Several of the facility's process lines were restarted in 2010 after the NRC concluded that actions taken by NFS were sufficient to provide reasonable assurance that they could be operated safely.

In 2011, the NRC will augment its normal inspections at NFS with additional inspections to ensure that actions taken by the company are effective and sustainable. These inspections include an assessment of readiness to restart the uranium hexafluoride process line, follow-up inspections for both the confirmatory action letter and an order issued to the facility, a problem identification and resolution inspection, and a design review inspection.

A copy of the NRC letter detailing the NFS review is available online in the NRC's Agency-wide Document Access and Management System at www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html. The ML number is ML110660633.

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