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NRC Schedules Meeting to Discuss Reactor Vessel Repair at Harris Nuclear Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a public meeting for Thursday, June 13, to discuss its special inspection regarding the discovery of a quarter-inch flaw in a reactor vessel head nozzle at the Shearon Harris nuclear plant and the ensuing repairs by Duke Energy.

The plant, operated by Duke, is located near New Hill, N.C., about 20 miles southwest of Raleigh.

The meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. at the Holly Springs Cultural Center, 300 W. Ballentine St., Holly Springs, N.C. The public is invited to attend the meeting and participate in the discussion with NRC officials.

The plant was shut down on May 15 when further analysis of ultrasonic data gathered during an earlier refueling outage revealed an irregularity about one-quarter inch long in a nozzle on the vessel head. The flaw did not penetrate the vessel head wall and there was no leakage. Duke Energy has completed repairs and expects to restart the unit soon.

“We have verified that the condition has been corrected and the plant can be operated safely,” said Victor McCree, NRC Region II Administrator. “Although there was no threat to people living near the plant, we felt it was important to conduct a follow-up meeting to answer questions residents might have.”

The NRC dispatched two specialized inspectors from the Region II offices in Atlanta to supplement the plant’s resident inspectors in assessing the events leading up to the discovery of the flaw. They also examined previous ultrasonic test records for the vessel head and evaluated the company’s repair of the problem. Preliminary findings of the inspection team will be discussed at the meeting, and the final inspection report will be released by mid-July.