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NRC Schedules Meeting to Discuss Inspections and Review of Honeywell Modifications

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a public meeting in Metropolis, Ill., for July 9 to discuss the status of the agency's inspections and review of modifications completed by Honeywell at its Metropolis uranium conversion plant.

In May 2012, as part of the agency's response to the 2011 nuclear accident in Japan, the NRC inspected the Honeywell facility and identified concerns related to the likelihood of a release of uranium hexafluoride following an earthquake or tornado. The NRC issued a confirmatory order to Honeywell in October 2012 outlining actions the company must take before it could resume its uranium conversion operations. The plant was shut down in May 2012 and the company has been enhancing and modifying equipment to meet the requirements of that order.

The facility enhancements are expected to reduce the likelihood that uranium hexafluoride would be released as a result of earthquakes or tornadoes. If NRC officials find the modifications acceptable and the plant meets agency regulations for operations and emergency planning, it will be allowed to resume full operations.

The NRC staff has completed its inspections of the modifications and recently relaxed the confirmatory order to allow the Metropolis plant to begin limited operations. The NRC is currently reviewing Honeywell's analyses of the facility's ability to withstand earthquakes or tornadoes to determine if full operation is acceptable.

The July 9 meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. CDT in the Community Center, 900 West 10th Street in Metropolis. Following a short presentation, NRC staff will be available to answer questions related to the agency's oversight of the facility.

The NRC has set up a toll-free telephone bridge line for people who may be unable to attend and that information is available by contacting Nick Peterka at 404-997-4556 or Nicholas.Peterka@nrc.gov or Richard Gibson at 404-997-4718 or Richard.Gibson@nrc.gov.

The Honeywell plant takes milled uranium and converts it into uranium hexafluoride. That compound is then processed at other facilities to make fuel for commercial power reactors.