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NRC to Meet With PPL on April 9th to Discuss Performance of Susquehanna Nuclear Power Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will meet with management of the Susquehanna nuclear power plant on Wednesday, April 9, to discuss the agency's annual review of safety performance at the Salem Township (Luzerne County), Pa., facility.

The public meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. at the Susquehanna Energy Information Center, which is located at 634 Salem Blvd. in Berwick, Pa. Prior to the session's adjournment, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the performance of the twin-reactor plant, which is owned and operated by PPL Susquehanna LLC, as well as address the agency's role in providing oversight of plant safety.

Under the NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators are used to assess plant performance. (Performance indicators are statistical measurements of plant and equipment performance which, if exceeded, trigger additional NRC oversight.) The colors range from green, connoting very low safety or security significance, to white, yellow or red, for an issue of high significance.

Overall, the Susquehanna plant operated safely during 2013. At the conclusion of the fourth quarter of last year, Susquehanna Unit 1 did not have any inspection findings that were greater than green (rising to the level requiring additional NRC oversight) or any performance indicators that were other than green (exceeding the threshold for the indicator and requiring additional NRC oversight). As such, Unit 1 remains under the normal level of NRC oversight.

However, Susquehanna Unit 2 was, and is continuing to, undergo additional NRC scrutiny. Unit 2 was in the Degraded Cornerstone Column of the agency's [Action Matrix](#), which dictates the level of NRC inspections, at the close of 2013 by virtue of having two "white" performance indicators in the area of initiating events.

One of those performance indicators, "Unplanned Scrams (shutdowns) with Complications," crossed the green/white threshold in the fourth quarter of 2012. After the NRC completed a supplemental inspection at the plant on Sept. 19, 2013, and determined that PPL had performed a thorough root-cause evaluation of the underlying issues and put in place appropriate corrective actions, the performance indicator was due to be closed out and return to green. However, the reactor

experienced an unplanned shutdown on Sept. 14, 2013, thereby crossing the green/white threshold for the performance indicator for “Unplanned Scrams per 7,000 Critical (online) Hours.” That change – in combination with the earlier white performance indicator – moved the unit from the Regulatory Response Column of the Action Matrix to the Degraded Cornerstone Column.

Consequently, Susquehanna Unit 2 will receive additional NRC oversight, including a supplemental inspection at the facility to review the related performance issues and the company’s response to them. The NRC will also hold a public meeting with PPL to review plant performance.

“The combination of two white performance indicators for Susquehanna Unit 2 may be indicative of some challenges the company is having with equipment reliability and/or operator performance. Therefore, we intend to delve into the reasons behind the unplanned shutdowns and ensure that PPL is appropriately addressing the root cause or causes,” NRC Region I Administrator Bill Dean said. “We will pursue that not only through a supplemental team inspection but also during a discussion with the company at a meeting that will be open to the public. The results of those reviews and interactions will be readily available to the public.”

In 2013, the NRC devoted approximately 7,380 hours to inspections at Susquehanna.

The NRC issues reports on performance at each plant twice a year: during the mid-cycle, or mid-point, of the year, and at the conclusion of the year. Inspection findings and performance indicators are also updated on a quarterly basis on the agency’s [website](#). Following the release of the Annual Assessment letters each March, the NRC meets with the public in vicinity of each plant to discuss the results.

Normal inspections are carried out by the two Resident Inspectors assigned to Susquehanna. Reviews are also performed at the sites by specialist inspectors assigned to the agency’s Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas to be inspected this year at Susquehanna are the plant’s program for the dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel; the site’s strike contingency plans; the facility’s snubbers, or dynamic restraints for large piping; and the implementation of an industry initiative to monitor the condition of underground piping at both units.

The Annual Assessment letters for Susquehanna, as well as the meeting notice for the April 9th public meeting, are available on the NRC [website](#). Current performance information is also available for [Susquehanna Unit 1](#) and [Susquehanna Unit 2](#).