

No: III-14-027

July 11, 2014

CONTACT: Viktoria Mitlyng 630-829-9662  
Prema Chandrathil 630-829-9663

## **NRC Schedules Open House July 17 to Discuss Performance of Prairie Island Nuclear Power Plant**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold a public open house July 17 to discuss the agency's annual assessment of safety performance for the Prairie Island nuclear power plant. The two-unit plant is operated by Northern States Power Co.-Minnesota., and is located in Welch, Minn., about 28 miles southeast of Minneapolis.

The open house is scheduled for 6-9 p.m. CDT at the Red Wing Public Library, 225 East Ave., Community Room, in Red Wing. Attendees can have one-on-one discussions with NRC staff members about the plant's 2013 performance and the agency's oversight of the facility.

"NRC inspectors spend a significant amount of time monitoring a wide range of plant activities to ensure the plant operates safely. Our hands-on approach is a key factor in protecting the public and environment," said NRC Region III Administrator Cynthia D. Pederson. "We hold public meetings near the plant every year to make our inspectors available and accessible to answer questions and have open discussions about NRC oversight with those who live near the plant."

The [annual assessment letter](#) sent from the NRC Region III office to the company addresses the performance of the plant during 2013 and will serve as the basis for the discussion.

Overall, the Prairie Island facility operated safely in 2013.

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. Performance indicators are statistical measurements of plant and equipment performance. The NRC's action matrix reflects overall plant performance and agency response. There are five columns in the matrix with Column 1 requiring a baseline level of inspections. A move to the other columns results in an increased level of NRC oversight and inspections.

All performance indicators for Unit 1 were green or low safety significance, but the unit was in Column 2 for the first three quarters due to a “white” finding of low-to-moderate safety significance for the failure to maintain an effective emergency plan by not prioritizing the repair of a high range vent gas radiation detector. The unit returned to Column 1 at the end of the year. Unit 2 had no safety significant findings but the unit had one “white” performance indicator in the area of mitigating systems and placed the unit in Column 2 during the fourth quarter of 2012. In November of 2013 the company notified the agency it was ready for NRC staff to inspect the actions taken to address the performance issues however, later in January the company requested the inspection be postponed due to questions regarding the effectiveness of the corrective actions. Mitigating systems are made up of key pieces of equipment and specific systems that must be available and reliable when needed

As a result, Prairie Island Unit 2 will receive increased agency oversight and NRC staff will conduct a supplemental inspection to follow up on the plants actions to address the performance issues. In order for Unit 2 to return to Column 1 the performance indicator must return to “green” and the results of the supplemental inspection must be adequate. Unit 1 will continue to receive the NRC’s normal level of oversight during 2014.

Inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant, inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and specialists from the agency’s headquarters in Rockville, Md. Among the areas of performance to be inspected this year by NRC inspectors are activities associated with radiological safety, steam generator replacement, and license renewal.

The most current performance information for Prairie Island [Unit 1](#) and [Unit 2](#) is available on the NRC website.