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NRC to Hold Annual Assessment Public Meeting Regarding Oyster Creek Nuclear Power Plant on May 28

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will discuss its annual assessment of safety performance at the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant during a public meeting on May 28th in Manahawkin, N.J.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Manahawkin, at 151 Route 72 West. During the meeting, the NRC staff will provide a brief presentation on the plant's performance and the agency's oversight activities at the Lacey Township (Ocean County), N.J., facility. It will be followed by a question-and-answer session.

Under the NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, the agency gauges plant performance through the use of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators, which are statistical measurements of plant performance that can trigger additional oversight if exceeded. The colors range from "green" to "white," "yellow" and "red," which is the highest level of significance.

On an overall basis, Oyster Creek, a boiling-water reactor owned by Exelon Generation Co. LLC, operated safely in 2014. However, as of the end of last year, the plant was receiving additional NRC oversight after its performance indicator for Unplanned Scrams (shutdowns) per 7,000 Critical Hours transitioned from "green" to "white" in the third quarter of 2014. This occurs when a plant has more than three unplanned shutdowns during the previous 7,000 hours of online operation.

The NRC conducted a supplemental inspection at the plant in December to review the company's root cause evaluation of, and corrective actions for, the issues related to the shutdowns. Based on the satisfactory results of that inspection, documented in a report issued on Jan. 20, 2015, the NRC closed out the issues and returned the plant to the normal level of NRC oversight as of March 4, 2015.

On April 27, 2015, the NRC finalized one "yellow" and one "white" inspection finding for the plant. A "yellow" classification indicates substantial safety significance while a "white" connotes low to moderate safety significance. The "yellow" finding involves design aspects of electromechanical relief valves, or EMRVs, for the plant. The "white" finding pertains to the maintenance of an emergency diesel generator at the facility.

Even though the violation involving the EMRVs has been classified as “yellow,” the NRC has determined it represents an old design issue. That is, the issue stems from an inspection finding involving a past design-related problem and does not reflect a current performance deficiency associated with existing programs, policies or procedures used by the company. As a result, the finding will not lead to Oyster Creek moving into the Degraded Cornerstone Column of the NRC’s [Action Matrix](#), but the NRC will carry out an inspection that will review Exelon’s root-cause evaluation and corrective actions for the issue.

However, the “white” inspection finding will result on Oyster Creek moving to the Regulatory Response Column of the Action Matrix. The NRC will increase its oversight and perform a supplemental team inspection targeted at the emergency diesel generator issue.

“Once Exelon notifies us of its readiness for these inspections, we will review whether the company has taken the steps necessary to properly address these issues and prevent recurrence,” NRC Region I Administrator Dan Dorman said.

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 the vicinity of each plant to discuss the results.

The NRC’s normal level of oversight at each U.S. nuclear power plant involves thousands of hours of inspection. In 2014, the agency devoted approximately 6,880 hours of review at Oyster Creek.

Normal inspections are performed by two Resident Inspectors assigned to Oyster Creek. Reviews are also carried out 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 Oyster Creek are the dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel, radiation monitoring, emergency preparedness and control room operator qualifications.

The Annual Assessment letter for [Oyster Creek](#), as well as the notice for the May 28th meeting, are available on the NRC website. Current performance information is also available for [Oyster Creek](#).