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ASLB to Hold Evidentiary Hearing on Turkey Point Canal Temperature Issue

An Atomic Safety and Licensing Board will hold an evidentiary hearing Jan. 11-12 in Homestead, Fla., to consider a challenge to license amendments that increase the ultimate heat sink water temperature limit for the cooling canal system at the Turkey Point nuclear power plant.

The ASLB is the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's independent body charged with conducting adjudicatory hearings and deciding legal challenges to the agency's licensing and enforcement actions. Florida Power & Light Co. (FPL) operates the two-unit Turkey Point plant near Homestead.

The hearing is scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. on Jan. 11 at the Hampton Inn and Suites, 2855 NE 9th St., in Homestead. It will continue until 5 p.m. on Jan. 12, unless the board finishes earlier.

An intervenor, Citizens Allied for Safe Energy (CASE), filed four proposed contentions regarding the license amendments granted to FPL in 2014 that allowed the company to increase the ultimate heat sink water temperature for the plant's external cooling canal system. The ASLB heard oral arguments last January on the admissibility of the contentions, and on March 23 granted a hearing on one contention. That contention claims the NRC staff's environmental assessment supporting the license amendment did not adequately address the potential impacts of the higher temperature limit on migration of highly saline water out of the cooling canals or saltwater intrusion into nearby aquifers. The Jan. 11-12 hearing will focus on the merits of this contention.

The evidentiary hearing is open to the public, but the board will only hear testimony and legal arguments from witnesses and representatives for CASE, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and FPL. As a result, no members of the public will be heard during this proceeding.

However, members of the public may submit written "limited appearance statements," regarding the license amendments and the contention under consideration. These statements, which may be considered by the judges, must be submitted no later than Jan. 15 to both the NRC Secretary and the chairman of the ASLB by mail at Office of the Secretary, Rulemakings and Adjudications Staff, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Washington, D.C. 20555-0001 and Administrative Judge Michael M. Gibson, Chairman, c/o Nicole Pepperl & Jennifer Scro, Board Law Clerks, Mail Stop T-3F23, U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission Washington, D.C. 20555-0001. They may also be submitted by fax to (301) 415-1101 and (301) 415-5599, or by email to hearingdocket@nrc.gov, nicole.pepperl@nrc.gov and jennifer.scro@nrc.gov.