

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Office of Public Affairs  
Washington, DC 20555  
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234  
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

No. 99-24

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(Tuesday, February 9, 1999)

## NRC TO HOLD INFORMAL PUBLIC HEARING ON PETITIONS CONCERNING RIVER BEND , PERRY NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold an informal public hearing February 22 in Rockville, Maryland, on two petitions asking that the NRC immediately shut down the River Bend Station and Perry Nuclear Power Plant and that it suspend or modify their operating licenses. River Bend Station is located in St. Francisville, Louisiana. The Perry Nuclear Power Plant is located in Perry, Ohio.

The hearing will begin at 1:00 p.m. in Room T-2B3 at NRC Headquarters at the Two White Flint North building, 11545 Rockville Pike. The NRC also has arranged for members of the public, who are unable to attend the hearing in Rockville, to participate via video teleconferencing at meeting facilities located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and Cleveland, Ohio. The remote sites are (1) Center For Instructional Telecommunications, Room 202, Coates Hall, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana and (2) The Forum Conference and Education Center, Inc., One Cleveland Center Office Building, 1375 East 9th Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

The hearing will be held in response to petitions filed by the Union of Concerned Scientists last fall that raise concerns about pinhole leaks in the metal cladding surrounding uranium fuel in the plants' reactor cores. The fuel cladding is one of three primary barriers protecting the public from exposure to radiation while the plants are operating.

In addition to calling for an immediate shutdown, the petitions call for suspension or modification of plant operating licenses until River Bend and Perry's design and licensing documents are updated to permit operation with failed fuel assemblies - or until all failed fuel assemblies are removed from the reactor. The NRC staff has already determined that the leaks pose no immediate safety concern.

The hearing is intended to give the petitioner, the licensees (Entergy Operations, Incorporated and FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Company), and the public an opportunity to provide additional information which will subsequently be used by the NRC staff to evaluate the petition. Members of the public who are interested in making presentations should contact Robert J. Fretz of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation at (301) 415-1324.

##