



NRC NEWS

U. S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Region IV
611 Ryan Plaza Drive - Suite 400
Arlington, TX 76011-4005

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Contact: Victor Dricks
Phone: 817-860-8128

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E-Mail: opa4@nrc.gov

NRC TO DISCUSS PERFORMANCE OF PALO VERDE NUCLEAR PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Arizona Public Service Co., on Thursday, April 1, to discuss the results of the agency's annual assessment of safety performance at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station. The facility is located near Wintersburg, AZ.

The meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. in Estrella Hall at Estrella Mountain Community College, 3000 Dysart Road, Avondale. The public is invited to observe the meeting and NRC officials will be available before the conclusion of the meeting to answer questions from the public on the safety performance of the plant.

The performance period to be discussed is January 1 to December 31, 2003. In addition, NRC staff will provide an overview of how the agency's Reactor Oversight Process works.

A letter from the NRC to Arizona Public Service Co. addresses the performance of the plant during this period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/palo_2003q4.pdf.

Overall, Palo Verde operated safely and fully met all cornerstone objectives (cornerstones are measures of plant performance). During a January 14 meeting with company officials, NRC staff discussed aspects of the safety conscious work environment at Palo Verde. The NRC believes that the company's assessment, as well as NRC reviews indicate that staff members feel free to raise safety issues to Palo Verde management.

But, APS has identified areas where it plans to focus additional attention. These areas include employee awareness and familiarity with the company's Employee Concerns Program

and Differing Professional Opinions Process, as well as the effectiveness of the Management Issues Tracking and Resolution program in resolving non-nuclear issues. Additionally, it appears that some workers may not effectively be using the company's problem identification process. Accordingly, the NRC staff will track the licensee's initiatives in these areas during an inspection scheduled for May.

Current performance indicators for the three units at Palo Verde are available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/PALO1/palo1_chart.html. Unit 2 data is at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/PALO2/palo2_chart.html. Unit 3 data is at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/PALO3/palo3_chart.html.

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