



NRC NEWS

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OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II

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NRC SCHEDULES REGULATORY CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS OCONEE NUCLEAR PLANT CONCERN

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has scheduled a regulatory conference with officials of Duke Energy on Wednesday, May 17, in Atlanta to discuss the risk significance of an inspection finding at the company's Oconee nuclear power plant, located near Seneca in northwestern S.C.

NRC and Duke officials will discuss the significance of an NRC inspection finding related to apparent untimely corrective actions in resolving deficiencies related to the east penetration room blowout panels for all three Oconee units. The meeting was requested by Duke.

The blowout panels are designed to "blow out" if there is a pipe break in that area and prevent water from flooding the auxiliary building and affecting safety-related equipment. Modifications to the panels resulted in a lack of assurance that the panels would perform as designed. In 2004, Duke indicated that additional modifications were necessary to prevent auxiliary building flooding. The NRC staff determined that adequate corrective actions have not been taken promptly to resolve the blowout panel concerns.

The NRC evaluates regulatory performance at commercial nuclear power plants with a color-coded system which classifies findings as either green, white, yellow or red, in increasing order of safety significance. The NRC's preliminary evaluation determined that this issue at Oconee is "greater than green," meaning it has more than very low safety significance.

The meeting is scheduled for 10:00 a.m. in the NRC's Region II office, located on the 24th floor of the Atlanta Federal Center at 61 Forsyth Street SW in Atlanta. The public is invited to attend to observe and will have one or more opportunities to talk with NRC officials after the business portion, but before the meeting is adjourned.

No decisions on final safety significance, any apparent violations or possible enforcement action will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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