



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC TO DISCUSS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT FOR SUSQUEHANNA NUCLEAR PLANT AT PUBLIC MEETING SET FOR MAY 19 IN BERWICK, PA.

The results of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's annual safety performance assessment for the Susquehanna nuclear power plant will be the subject of a public meeting on Tuesday, May 19.

The meeting will begin at 3:30 p.m. at the Susquehanna Energy Information Center, located at 634 Salem Blvd. in Berwick, Pa. Following the meeting, NRC staff will answer questions from the public on the plant's performance, as well as the agency's oversight of the facility. Before the meeting, NRC staff will be available to meet with members of the public during an informal information session scheduled for 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the same location.

Susquehanna, which is the site of two boiling-water reactors, is located in Salem Township (Luzerne County), Pa. The plant is owned and operated by PPL.

Overall, the Susquehanna plant operated safely during 2008. At the conclusion of last year, as assessed by the NRC's Reactor Oversight Process, there were no performance indicators for the plant that were other than "green" and no inspection findings that were "greater than green." Therefore, for the rest of 2009, the plants will receive the very detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for plants that are operating well. In 2008, the NRC devoted approximately 6,400 hours of inspection to Susquehanna, including four major team inspections.

On Jan. 28, 2009, the NRC issued a potential "chilling effect" letter to PPL regarding possible worker concerns about the safety conscious work environment at the site. This refers to an environment in which plant employees feel free to raise safety concerns without fear of reprisal. The NRC is currently evaluating the adequacy of the company's response and will schedule a separate meeting to discuss the progress and results of improvement activities in that area. The agency will also continue to monitor PPL's progress through its regular inspection program and will discuss the subject in the Mid-Year Assessment Letter for the plant, due to be issued in August.

“In 2008, all but one of the 26 commercial power reactors in Region I, which covers the Northeastern United States, fully met our clearly defined performance criteria. Susquehanna was among the plants achieving those objectives. That means those plants will receive the normal level of NRC oversight this year if they continue to meet the high safety benchmarks set out for each site,” said NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins. “That said, our inspectors will remain on the lookout for any problems or adverse trends that might indicate a change in performance. As always, we will not hesitate to act should we identify any safety concerns.”

The NRC utilizes a combination of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to measure plant performance. The colors start with “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” or “red,” commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved. The agency issues reports on performance at specific plants 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 the NRC’s web site, www.nrc.gov, at the conclusion of each quarter. Following the release of the annual reports every March, the NRC meets with representatives of the company and the public in the vicinity of each plant to discuss the results. The meetings are in keeping with the agency’s commitment to transparency with regard to its activities.

The annual assessment letter for the Susquehanna plant is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/susq_2008q4.pdf. The notice for the annual assessment meeting is available in the NRC’s Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML091050041. ADAMS is available at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams/web-based.html>. Help in using ADAMS can be obtained via the NRC’s Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR.Resource@nrc.gov.

Inspections are carried out by the two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to Susquehanna and by inspection specialists from the agency’s Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas at Susquehanna to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are radiological safety, permanent plant modifications, emergency planning, the dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel and power uprates.

Current performance information for Susquehanna 1 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SUSQ1/susq1_chart.html. Current performance information for Susquehanna 2 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SUSQ2/susq2_chart.html.

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