



NRC NEWS

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Office of Public Affairs Region III
2443 Warrenville Road
Lisle IL 60532

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Contacts:

Viktoria Mitlyng 630-829-9662

Prema Chandrathil 630-829-9663

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E-Mail: opa3@nrc.gov

Web site: www.nrc.gov

NRC TO DISCUSS 2009 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF BRAIDWOOD NUCLEAR PLANT JUNE 3

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Exelon Generation Company, LLC, on Thursday, June 3, to discuss the agency's assessment of last year's safety performance at the Braidwood Nuclear Power Plant. The plant has two reactor units in Braceville, Ill., 20 miles southwest of Joliet.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. CDT at the Fossil Ridge Public Library District meeting room, 386 W. Kennedy Rd., in Braidwood. The NRC staff will present the results of the assessment, talk about the NRC, and its range of activities, and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Braidwood plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region III Administrator Mark Satorius said. "This meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and area residents. One of NRC's main goals is to explain to people in the community how the agency regulates nuclear power plants to protect people and the environment."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during the 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/brai_2009q4.pdf.

The NRC's assessment concluded Braidwood operated safely during the period. The agency uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

NRC inspectors identified one "white" finding of low to moderate safety significance in 2009 for Braidwood Unit 1. This finding involved the failure of the containment sump suction isolation

valve to fully open due to deficiencies in valve design. The valve is not required for routine plant operations, but would be used in certain accident conditions. If it failed to operate during an accident, other safety equipment would fulfill its safety function. The NRC will conduct a supplemental inspection to make sure the problems associated with the finding have been understood and resolved.

Braidwood Unit 2 performed at a level that requires no additional oversight from the NRC.

The NRC letter also addressed a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of human performance. Cross-cutting issues “cut across” multiple areas of plant operation. Examples of cross-cutting issues include problems associated with the plant staff’s ability to identify and correct problems, to develop effective procedures and adhere to these procedures. Cross-cutting issues cannot be quantified and are not assigned safety significance. However, they serve as early indicators of potential performance deficiencies. In Braidwood’s case, the cross-cutting issue involves a failure to make conservative assumptions and demonstrate a proposed action is safe. The plant has developed a plan to address this issue but these actions have not yet been effective. When a substantive cross-cutting issue is identified at a nuclear power plant, the NRC expects the problem to be corrected.

The NRC also plans to conduct an inspection of the independent spent fuel storage facility the utility plans to open at Braidwood. It will focus on preoperational testing of installation plans and activities and the review of the operating plan.

Braidwood will continue to receive the detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for all nuclear plants. In addition, a supplemental inspection will be conducted of the independent spent fuel storage facility. Inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency’s headquarters in Rockville, Md. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are emergency preparedness and radiation monitoring.

Current performance information for Braidwood is available on the NRC’s web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BRAI1/brai1_chart.html (Unit 1) and http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BRAI2/brai2_chart.html (Unit 2).

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