



NRC NEWS

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NRC STAFF TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS SEPTEMBER 27 TO DISCUSS D.C. COOK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT RESTART ISSUES AND REACTOR OVERSIGHT CHANGES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold three public meetings Sept. 27 in southwest Michigan to discuss issues regarding the restart of the Unit 1 reactor at the D.C. Cook Nuclear Power Plant and recent changes in the agency's reactor oversight program.

The first meeting will begin at 9 a.m. EDT in the D.C. Cook plant's Training Building. The plant is located at 7700 Red Arrow Highway between Bridgman and Stevensville. NRC staff members will meet with American Electric Power Company officials to discuss the status of Unit 1 containment structural issues. The meeting is open to public observation and NRC staff members will be available after the meeting to answer questions.

The utility has been working on structural modifications in the Unit 1 containment building. Similar structural modifications were done on the plant's Unit 2 containment building before the unit restarted in early July. Unit 1 is scheduled to resume operations early next year. Both units were shut down in September 1997 after an NRC design inspection questioned the capabilities of key plant emergency systems to meet their design requirements.

A second meeting is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. EDT, also at the plant's Training Building, during which NRC staff members will meet with company officials to discuss the schedule of activities and licensing issues for the Unit 1 restart, and the operational performance of Unit 2. This meeting also is open to public observation and NRC staff members will be available after the meeting to answer questions.

A third meeting will begin at 7 p.m. EDT at the Courtyard by Marriott, 1592 Mall Drive, in Benton Harbor. NRC staff members will discuss the agency's new reactor oversight process. Members of the public will have the opportunity to ask questions during the meeting.

The new oversight process uses more objective, timely, and safety-significant criteria in assessing performance, while seeking to more effectively and efficiently regulate the industry. It also takes into account improvements in the performance of the nuclear industry over the past twenty years.

Under the new oversight program, inspections by NRC resident inspectors and regional office-based personnel are supplemented by statistical measures of plant activities called performance

indicators. These performance indicators measure important safety aspects of plant operations, including the viability of redundant safety systems, emergency planning, radiation protection, and security measures.

Inspection findings and performance indicators for each nuclear power plant are posted on the NRC's internet web site every three months. The safety significance of each inspection finding or performance indicator is assessed with a color coding -- green, white, yellow, or red.

The NRC response to the inspection findings and performance indicators will be based on the assessment. A green finding would receive normal NRC oversight, while white, yellow, or red assessments would receive increasing NRC involvement. Multiple red findings could result in a plant shutdown.

The NRC staff began using the new reactor oversight process in most of the country's nuclear power plants in April, but not at the D.C. Cook plant as it was not operating at that time. The new process began at Cook in July when Unit 2 resumed operations. Some performance information on Unit 2 is available on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/ras> .

A plain language summary of the new reactor oversight process is available from the NRC Office of Public Affairs or on the web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/primer.htm> .

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