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Contact: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

E-mail: opal@nrc.gov

NRC TO DISCUSS 2005 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR SALEM AND HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of PSEG Nuclear LLC on Wednesday, May 17, to discuss the agency's annual assessment of safety performance at the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear power plants. The period of performance to be discussed is Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2005.

PSEG Nuclear owns the plants, which are located in Hancocks Bridge (Salem County), N.J.

The meeting, which will be open to the public for observation, is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. at the Bridgeport Holiday Inn, One Pureland Drive in Swedesboro, N.J. The hotel is located off Exit 10 of Interstate 295. The NRC staff will present the results of the assessment and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"As we do every year, we have carefully reviewed the safety performance of the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear power plants during the previous calendar year," NRC Region I Deputy Administrator Marc Dapas said. "The meeting on May 17th will afford the public a chance to learn more about the results of our assessment and to pose any questions they might have regarding plant performance or our oversight activities."

Overall, Hope Creek and Salem Units 1 and 2 operated safely during the period. The NRC uses color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to assess nuclear power plant performance. The colors start with "green" and then increase to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

All of the inspection findings and performance indicators for the Salem units during 2005 were determined to be "green." While Hope Creek inspection findings and performance indicators were "green" during the last quarter of last year, the plant did have a "white" (low to moderate safety significance) finding open during the first three quarters. Identified in the fourth quarter of 2004, the finding involved inadequate evaluation and corrective action for a degraded level control valve for a moisture separator drain tank that resulted in the separation of a drain line. The NRC staff completed a supplemental inspection in response to the finding in June 2005 and concluded that a satisfactory root

cause analysis of the issue had been performed and appropriate corrective actions implemented. As a result, the finding was closed out as of the end of the third quarter of last year.

In the agency's 2005 mid-year assessment for the Salem units and Hope Creek, the NRC continued a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of problem identification and resolution (PI&R). A cross-cutting issue is one that affects several different areas of performance. Based on progress the agency has seen in this area since then, as well as ongoing corrective actions, the NRC concluded in the end-of-year assessment letter for the plants that the issue could be closed out.

The NRC staff has determined that a cross-cutting issue in the area of safety conscious work environment will remain open for the plants, with the NRC continuing to monitor the company's progress. The issue, which involves maintaining an environment in which workers feel free to raise safety concerns, was noted in the agency's mid-cycle assessment letter for the plants, issued last Aug. 30. Last September, the NRC completed a team inspection at the plant that focused on the safety conscious work environment. The inspectors determined that progress had been made, but they also noted some issues requiring additional action and attention. Therefore, the cross-cutting issue remained open. The company recently completed an assessment of the safety conscious work environment at the site, and the NRC will perform an inspection of this area in June.

Under a memo issued by the NRC's Executive Director for Operations, additional inspection resources remain available for the site. The agency will also conduct baseline, or routine inspections, at the plants. Routine inspections are performed by four NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the site and by inspection specialists from the Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected during the next year by NRC specialists are radiological safety, fire protection and dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel.

Letters sent from the NRC Region I Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the facilities during the period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. The letter regarding the Salem units is available on the NRC web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/salm_2005q4.pdf . The letter regarding the Hope Creek plant is available at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/hope_2005q4.pdf .

The meeting notice, with the meeting agenda attached, is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML061090274. ADAMS is accessible via the agency's web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> . Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC's Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR@NRC.GOV .

Current performance information for Salem Unit 1 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SALM1/salm1_chart.html .

Current performance information for Salem Unit 2 is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SALM2/salm2_chart.html .

Current performance information for Hope Creek is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/HOPE/hope_chart.html .

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