



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO HOLD REGULATORY CONFERENCE WITH ARIZONA PUBLIC SERVICE CO. ON PALO VERDE NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold a regulatory conference with Arizona Public Service Co. officials on Nov. 20, to discuss the results of a special inspection at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station.

Conferees will discuss the significance of an inspection finding regarding the plant's emergency spray ponds. Palo Verde, which is operated by APS, is located about 55 miles west of Phoenix.

The meeting, which will be open to public observation, will begin at 9 a.m. in NRC Region IV offices in Arlington, Texas. The public will have an opportunity to observe and ask questions of NRC staff before the meeting is adjourned. Members of the public can listen to the meeting via a special telephone line by calling 1-800-952-9677, and requesting ext. 474.

The NRC staff will discuss with APS the inspection finding and an associated apparent violation of NRC requirements identified in an inspection report issued on Sept. 28. In 1994, APS began adding a chemical to the site's emergency spray ponds, which serve as a source of cooling water for safety-related equipment. The additive contributed to a buildup of chemical deposits on the essential cooling water heat exchangers, which provide cooling to safety-related systems. One heat exchanger may have become inoperable during a six-month period during 2003.

The NRC evaluates regulatory performance at commercial nuclear power plants with a color coded process which classifies regulatory findings as either green, white, yellow or red, in increasing order of safety significance. The NRC's preliminary evaluation determined that the safety significance of the problem was "greater than green," meaning that the violation involved more than very low safety significance.

No decision on the final significance, the apparent violation or any contemplated enforcement action will be made during the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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