



NRC NEWS

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NRC TO DISCUSS 2007 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR KEWAUNEE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Dominion Energy Kewaunee on Tuesday, April 1, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Kewaunee Nuclear Power Plant. The plant is located at Kewaunee, Wisc.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. at Fox Hills Resort Conference Center, 250 W. Church Street, in Mishicot. 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 and comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of Kewaunee and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," NRC Region III Administrator James Caldwell said. "This meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and with local officials and area residents. Our goal is to explain how the NRC works and make as much information as possible available on our regulation of these facilities."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during 2007 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/kewa_2007q4.pdf.

The NRC's assessment concluded that overall the Kewaunee plant operated safely during the period but with moderate degradation in safety performance. The NRC 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 “yellow” finding of substantial safety significance. This finding involved the failure to evaluate and repair an oil leak on an emergency diesel generator. The plant has two diesel generators. In case of a loss of offsite power, diesel generators power the plant’s safety equipment. Under certain accident conditions, this diesel generator would not have been able to perform its safety function.

In addition, there was one “white” performance indicator reflecting the increased number of unplanned plant shutdowns during the first three quarters of 2007. During the fourth quarter, the performance indicator was “green” as the number of unplanned shutdowns decreased.

The letter also addresses two substantive cross-cutting areas; problem identification and resolution and human performance. These issues are referred to as “substantive cross-cutting” because they affect multiple areas of plant performance.

The NRC’s letter to the utility refers to 11 inspection findings that are attributed to inadequate problem evaluation and resolution and 12 findings attributed to problems with human performance.

On October 4, 2007, the NRC held a public meeting with plant representatives to discuss the plant’s efforts to address these repetitive cross-cutting issues. The utility presented its plans to move towards resolving these areas of concern.

Even though the NRC has observed some improvement in these areas since the October meeting, more time is necessary to ensure that the planned corrective actions and initiatives are sustained.

At the NRC request, the company will discuss the progress of its actions to address deficiencies in the areas of problem identification and resolution and human performance during the April 1 public meeting.

The NRC assessment letter states that both of these issues will remain open until the number of findings with the same cross-cutting aspect is reduced or when the NRC gains confidence in the plant’s ability to identify and address technical and human performance problems.

As part of the NRC’s continuing review of the substantive cross-cutting issues, an additional problem identification and resolution inspection will be conducted.

In addition, the NRC has requested that the company submit a report detailing the status of its corrective actions in the two areas of concern, a current assessment of personnel performance and an updated assessment of the station’s safety culture.

Routine and focused inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency’s headquarters in Rockville, Md.

Current performance information for Kewaunee is available on the NRC's web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/KEWA/kewa_chart.htm .

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