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NRC SCHEDULES OPEN HOUSE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ON 2008 PERFORMANCE OF VOGTLE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled an open house for Thursday, March 26, and will be available to discuss and answer questions about the agency's assessment of safety performance during 2008 at the Vogtle nuclear power plant. The plant, operated by Southern Nuclear Operating Co., is near Waynesboro, Ga., about 26 miles southeast of Augusta.

The open house is informal and scheduled to run from 2-4 p.m. in the Burke County Courthouse, 602 Liberty Street in Waynesboro.

NRC staff will be available to answer questions on the safety performance of the Vogtle plant, as well as the NRC role in ensuring safe plant operation. Although this open house is specifically designed to answer questions about the plant's performance during the previous year, NRC staff members will also be available to address general issues regarding license renewal for the operating units and the NRC's role in the two additional units planned at the Vogtle site.

"Throughout the year, we inspect and review the performance of the Vogtle plant and all commercial nuclear plants," NRC Region II Administrator Luis Reyes said. "We issue several inspection reports during the year and an overall annual assessment. This open house allows us to discuss that assessment with local officials and people near the plant, and answer any questions they may have."

A letter sent from the NRC Region II office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during 2008 and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/vog_2008q4.pdf.

The NRC found that Vogtle's 2008 performance met all NRC safety objectives. With the exception of some generic inspections, such as ground water protection and operator licensing exams, the agency plans only routine or baseline inspections at the plant in 2009. Both Vogtle units had issues that resulted in additional inspections and oversight through the first three quarters of last year. However, performance in the fourth quarter of 2008 resulted in both units receiving less NRC oversight.

Current performance information for Vogtle Unit 1 is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/VOG1/vog1_chart.html. Current performance information for Unit 2 is at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/VOG2/vog2_chart.html.

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