



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa. 19406
E-mail: opa1@nrc.gov
Site: <http://www.nrc.gov>

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

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Email: OPA1.RESOURCE@nrc.gov

NRC TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETING ON APRIL 6 IN SALEM, N.J. TO DISCUSS ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF SALEM, HOPE CREEK NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a public meeting on Tuesday, April 6 regarding the agency's annual assessment of safety performance for the Salem and Hope Creek nuclear power plants during 2009.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. at the PSEG Energy & Environmental Resource Center, at 244 Chestnut St. in Salem, N.J. Prior to the meeting's conclusion, there will be an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions of the NRC staff regarding the plant's performance, as well as the agency's oversight of the facility.

Salem is the site of two pressurized-water reactors while Hope Creek is the site of a single boiling-water reactor. All of the reactors are located in Hancocks Bridge (Salem County), N.J. They are owned and operated by PSEG Nuclear, LLC.

Overall, the Salem and Hope Creek plants operated safely during 2009. At the conclusion of last year, there were no performance indicators for the plants that were other than "green" and no inspection findings that were "greater than green." Therefore, for the remainder of 2010, the Salem and Hope Creek plants will continue to receive the normal, very detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for plants that are operating well.

In 2009, the NRC devoted approximately 6,000 hours to inspection of the Salem facility, including two major team inspections. With respect to Hope Creek, that unit received approximately 5,000 hours of NRC inspection last year, including two major team inspections.

"Each year, the NRC steps back and assesses the performance of nuclear power plants in a systematic and detailed manner. We take these reviews very seriously and they help guide our oversight in the year ahead," NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. "We also believe that providing the public with an opportunity to not only learn about these results first-hand but to communicate with us on our determinations is an integral part of the process and consistent with our commitment to openness and transparency."

In the NRC's previous Annual Assessment for the Salem units, issued on March 4, 2009, the agency identified what is known as a "substantive cross-cutting issue" – that is, an issue that cuts across multiple areas of performance. The issue involved inadequate plant documentation and

procedures. The NRC said at that time that certain criteria would have to be met before the issue could be closed out. In the agency's Mid-Cycle Assessment letter for the units, issued on Sept. 1, 2009, the NRC concluded the criteria had not yet been met based on independent inspections.

However, the 2010 Annual Assessment Letter for the Salem units notes that substantial progress has been made in the implementation of corrective actions in that area, including a significant reduction in the number of inspection findings related to inadequate documentation or procedures. Therefore, the NRC has determined that PSEG has demonstrated "sustainable improved performance" regarding the issue and has closed it out.

The NRC utilizes a combination of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to gauge plant performance. The colors start with "green," representing very low safety significance, to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the significance of the issues involved. The agency issues reports on performance at specific plants twice a year. Inspection findings and performance indicators are also updated on the NRC's web site, www.nrc.gov, each quarter. Following the release of the annual reports every March, the NRC meets with the public in the vicinity of each plant to discuss the results. The meetings are in keeping with the agency's commitment to transparency with regard to its activities.

The annual assessment letter for the Salem units is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/salm_2009q4.pdf. The annual assessment letter for Hope Creek is available on the NRC web site at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/hope_2009q4.pdf. The notice for the annual assessment meeting for the plants is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management System (ADAMS) under accession number ML100810345. ADAMS is available at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html>. Help in using ADAMS can be obtained via the NRC's Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR.Resources@NRC.GOV.

Routine inspections at Salem and Hope Creek are carried out by four NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plants and by inspection specialists from the agency's Region I Office in King of Prussia, Pa. Among the areas at the Salem units to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are the dry cask storage of spent nuclear fuel and radiation safety. Among the areas at Hope Creek to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are fire protection, emergency preparedness and radiation safety.

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 at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/SALM2/salm2_chart.html. Current performance information for Hope Creek is available at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/HOPE/hope_chart.html.

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