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Contact: Viktoria Mitlyng (630) 829-9662
Prema Chandrathil (630) 829-9663

E-Mail: OPA3.RegionIII@nrc.gov

NRC SCHEDULES TWO PUBLIC MEETINGS MAY 12 TO DISCUSS BRAIDWOOD NUCLEAR STATION PERFORMANCE AND SPECIAL INSPECTION FINDINGS AT BRAIDWOOD AND BYRON PLANTS

Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials have scheduled two public meetings for Thursday, May 12, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for 2010 at the Braidwood Nuclear Power Station and the preliminary findings of a recent special inspection at Braidwood and at the Byron Nuclear Power Station.

The Braidwood facility with two reactor units is located near Braidwood, Ill., about 20 miles south southwest of Joliet. The Byron Station, which has two units similar to those at Braidwood, is located about 17 miles southwest of Rockford. Both facilities are operated by Exelon Generation Co.

The two meetings, which will be held consecutively, are open to the public.

The performance assessment meeting is scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. CDT at the Braidwood City Hall, 141 W. Main St., Braidwood. The NRC staff will discuss the results of the 2010 assessment with Exelon representatives, talk about the NRC and its range of activities, and be available to respond to questions or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

The special inspection meeting will follow the first session, starting at about 6:45 p.m. CDT. The NRC special inspection team will present the findings of its review of two issues – one involving backup cooling pumps at both Braidwood and Byron and the second involving the loss of all equipment alarms in the Braidwood Unit 2 control room. The public is invited to observe and participate in the meeting.

“The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Braidwood facility and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities,” said NRC Region III Administrator Mark Satorius. “The first Braidwood meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety

performance with members of the local community. The goal of this meeting is to explain how the NRC works to protect people and the environment and to answer questions from residents about nuclear regulation.”

“The second meeting will present the preliminary findings of two safety issues, one involving a backup cooling system at both the Byron and Braidwood stations and the second covering the failure of the control room equipment alarms at one of the Braidwood units,” he added.

2010 Safety Performance at Braidwood

A letter sent from the NRC Region III office to plant officials addressed the performance of the plant during 2010 and will serve as the basis for the first meeting’s discussion. It is available on the NRC website at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/brai_2010q4.pdf.

Overall, the NRC found that the Braidwood facility operated safely in 2010.

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. Performance indicators are statistical measurements of plant and equipment performance.

All performance indicators and inspection findings for Braidwood Unit 1 during 2010 were determined to be “green” while all Unit 2 performance indicators and findings were “green” except for one “white” finding that resulted from a valve failure during routine testing in June 2009. After a follow-up inspection, the NRC determined that the valve problem was resolved and sufficient corrective actions were taken.

With the resolution of the valve issue, Braidwood will receive the detailed NRC inspection regime required for plants that are operating well and require no additional oversight.

Braidwood and Byron Special Inspection

The special inspection began March 31 to review two issues:

- On March 24, 2011, Braidwood lost all equipment alarms in the Unit 2 control room. These audible and visual alarms, called annunciators, indicate abnormal conditions in the plant. Other equipment data and indicators remained available, and there was no impact on plant safety equipment or operations.
- In February 2011 NRC inspectors identified a concern with backup cooling pumps, called auxiliary feedwater pumps, at the Byron Station. Since the Braidwood Station has a similar design, the pump concern involved that plant as well. Further analysis by Exelon determined that the pumps would not be available to perform their safety function if an air bubble were present in the

pipng carrying water to the pumps. These pumps are not used during routine plant operation. They are used during reactor startup and as a backup system for the regular cooling equipment.

(This special inspection was previously announced in NRC News Release III-11-007, issued April 6, 2011.)

Inspections Planned for 2011 at Braidwood

Inspections at Braidwood 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. In addition to the day-to-day inspections by the resident inspectors, areas of plant operations being inspected this year include in-service inspection of safety equipment and systems, radiation protection, emergency preparedness, and dry cask spent fuel storage.

The most current performance information for Braidwood is available on the NRC website at: (Unit 1) http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BRAI1/brai1_chart.html and (Unit 2) http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/BRAI2/brai2_chart.html.

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