



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs Region III

2443 Warrenville Road

Lisle IL 60532

Site: www.nrc.gov

Blog: <http://public-blog.nrc-gateway.gov>

No. III-12-011

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

March 29, 2012

E-Mail: OPA3@nrc.gov

NRC SCHEDULES PUBLIC MEETING FOR APRIL 5 TO DISCUSS PERRY NUCLEAR POWER PLANT PERFORMANCE IN 2011

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of FirstEnergy Nuclear Operating Co. on Thursday, April 5, to discuss the agency's assessment of safety performance for last year at the Perry nuclear power plant. The single unit plant is located in Perry, Ohio, about 35 miles northeast of Cleveland.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. EDT at the Quail Hollow Resort, 11080 Concord Hambden Road, in Painesville. 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 or comments from the public before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Perry plant and the nation's other nuclear power facilities," said Acting Regional Administrator for NRC Region III Cynthia Pederson. "During this meeting, we will discuss the plant's performance during last year and the NRC's actions to make sure the plant continues to operate safely, including additional inspections in response to the events at the Fukushima Daiichi facilities to evaluate the safety of US nuclear plants. Those reviews showed that Perry and other US plants continue to operate safely."

A letter sent from the NRC Region III Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during the period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC website at http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/perr_2011q4.pdf.

While overall, the plant operated safely last year, the NRC identified some issues which have prompted the NRC to increase its oversight of the plant.

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.

The NRC letter talks about the plant having one "white" finding of low to moderate safety significance and a "white" performance indicator during 2011. Both are associated with weaknesses in the plant's radiation exposure control practices.

“Even though these weaknesses did not result in harm the workers, the plant or the public, we expect FirstEnergy to take the necessary actions to ensure the radiological safety of their employees,” Pederson said.

The “white” finding involved the failure of Perry personnel to make adequate preparations for retracting a radioactive source range monitor - a device that measures nuclear reactions during certain plant conditions - from the reactor core. The NRC conducted a Special Inspection which had concluded that the incident could have resulted in an overexposure to workers performing this activity.

The “white” performance indicator for Occupational Exposure Control Effectiveness is associated with the increase in the number of occurrences involving deficiencies in this area during 2011.

The NRC will perform a supplemental inspection to make sure the plant understands the causes of these deficiencies and has taken effective short- and long-term corrective actions to prevent their recurrence.

The letter notes that the NRC has continued to identify cross-cutting issues in the area of human performance for four and a half years. While there were improvements in 2011 in areas such as work planning, the NRC said overall human performance problems at the plant remain unresolved. These issues will remain open until the NRC is satisfied the plant has shown sustained improvement. Cross-cutting issues are issues that affect multiple areas of plant operation.

As a result of persistent deficiencies in human performance, the NRC is requiring FirstEnergy to provide up-to-date information on its current and projected corrective actions in writing within 30 days of the assessment letter. In addition, the NRC told the company to discuss these actions during the Apr. 5 public meeting.

Regular inspections will continue to be performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill., and the agency’s headquarters in Rockville, Md. Among the areas of plant operations being inspected this year are radiation safety, buried piping and tanks, independent spent fuel installation, emergency preparedness and fire protection.

Current performance information for Perry is available on the NRC website at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/PERR1/perr1_chart.html .

###

News releases are available through a free *listserv* subscription at the following Web address:
<http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/listserver.html>. The NRC homepage at www.nrc.gov also offers a SUBSCRIBE link. E-mail notifications are sent to subscribers when news releases are posted to NRC's Web site.