



NRC NEWS

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Office of Public Affairs Region III
2443 Warrenville Road
Lisle IL 60532

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Contacts:

Viktoria Mitlyng 630-829-9662
Prema Chandrathil 630-829-9663

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E-Mail: opa3@nrc.gov

Web site: www.nrc.gov

NRC TO DISCUSS 2008 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR PALISADES NUCLEAR POWER PLANT MAY 26

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a public meeting with representatives of Entergy Nuclear Operations on Monday, May 26, to discuss the agency's assessment of the safety performance during 2008 at the Palisades Nuclear Power Plant. The plant is located in Covert, Mich., five miles south of South Haven.

The meeting, which will be open to the public, is scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. EDT at Lake Michigan College, 125 Veterans Boulevard, in South Haven. 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 about the NRC's oversight before the close of the meeting.

"The NRC continually reviews the performance of the Palisades plant and the nation's other commercial nuclear power facilities," said NRC Region III Administrator Mark Satorius. "This meeting allows us to discuss our annual assessment of safety performance with the company and members of the local community. We want to help people understand how the NRC works to protect the public and the environment and make sure as much information as possible is available on the NRC's regulation of nuclear power plants."

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 Web site at:

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/pali_2008q4.pdf

The NRC's assessment concluded that overall Palisades operated safely in 2008. The NRC utilizes a combination of color-coded inspection findings and performance indicators to measure plant performance. The colors go from "green" to "white," "yellow" or "red," commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved.

In 2008, all performance indicators were determined to be "green," or of very low safety significance. Performance indicators are a statistical measure of plant performance.

NRC inspectors identified one “white” finding, meaning it was of low to moderate safety significance. This finding involved the failure to recognize and evaluate the impact of radiological hazards at the plant. The NRC plans to conduct a supplemental inspection to make sure that plant employees and management understand the causes of the problem and have addressed them to prevent recurrence.

The NRC letter talks of a newly identified substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of human performance. The NRC refers to performance deficiencies that cut across multiple areas of plant operation as “substantive cross-cutting issues.” These issues cannot be quantified and are not assigned safety significance. When such an issue is identified, the NRC expects the problem to be corrected.

At Palisades, the substantive cross-cutting issue relates to weaknesses in procedures and documentation practices. Of 17 findings with cross-cutting aspects in human performance identified in 2008, six shared a common weakness in the plant’s procedures and documentation practices. This cross-cutting issue will remain open until the number of findings associated with human performance decreases or the NRC develops confidence that the utility has effectively addressed the issue.

In 2009, in addition to the supplemental inspection, Palisades will continue to receive the very detailed inspection regime used by the NRC for all plants. Routine inspections are performed by two NRC Resident Inspectors assigned to the plant and by inspection specialists from the Region III Office in Lisle, Ill. Among the areas of plant operations to be inspected this year by NRC specialists are emergency preparedness, fire protection and engineering modifications.

Current performance information for Palisades is available on the NRC’s web site at:
http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/PALI/pali_chart.html

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