



NRC NEWS

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NRC SAYS PALISADES PERFORMANCE HAS IMPROVED BUT STILL NEEDS HEIGHTENED OVERSIGHT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission concluded that the Palisades nuclear plant has adequately addressed last year's safety problems but still requires additional oversight. The plant is owned by Entergy Nuclear Operations and is located in Covert, Mich., approximately 40 miles west of Kalamazoo.

The NRC issued a report today on a follow-up inspection conducted by nine NRC inspectors from Sept. 17-28, 2012 to evaluate the plant's resolution of safety issues identified in 2011. These issues resulted in the plant moving from Column I of the NRC's performance Action Matrix, which involves the normal level of NRC inspections, to Column III, where plants get an increased level of inspection. As part of this increased oversight, NRC inspectors also conducted an independent review of the plant's safety culture, which included interviews with over 100 employees.

NRC inspectors concluded that the plant has taken appropriate actions to address last year's findings and that the plant's safety culture was adequate and improving. As a result, the plant is being moved back to Column I, which would normally indicate that the plant would no longer get increased oversight by the agency.

However, the NRC has decided to deviate from its normal process to conduct over 1000 additional hours of inspections at the plant in 2013 in order to ensure:

1. The remaining corrective actions to improve the organization and strengthen the safety culture at the site are properly implemented and can be sustained.
2. The leaks that occurred at the plant in 2012 -- and the plant's proposed corrective actions are well understood so that these issues will not lead to additional safety concerns.

In addition, the Region III staff plans to conduct enhanced communication with the communities in southwest Michigan regarding the status of NRC's oversight, safety improvements at the plant, and the resolution of technical issues. This will be accomplished through public meetings, webinars and other means as called for in order to be responsive to the communities of interest.

“While the licensee has demonstrated satisfactory resolution of the most significant risk issues and we have no immediate safety concerns, other issues, such as the leaks that came to light during this year, continue to occur,” said Region III Administrator Charles Casto. “We have chosen to deviate from our normal process and continue our inspections at an elevated pace ensuring that all issues are resolved. Our inspectors will continue their relentless focus on reactor safety and ensuring the protection of the public.”

Copies of the NRC’s inspection report and request for heightened oversight will be available through the NRC’s [Agencywide Documents Access and Management System](#) (ADAMS) at the NRC website or by contacting the NRC’s Region III office.

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