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NRC UPDATES PUBLIC ON LICENSE RENEWAL PROCESS AT VERMONT YANKEE

BRATTLEBORO, VT – Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials say the renewal of the license for the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant in nearby Vernon hinges on whether the plant can be operated safely.

"We will only approve an additional 20 years of operation if the agency finds that the nuclear plant can be operated safely through that period," NRC Senior Project Manager for the Vermont Yankee license renewal review Johnny Eads said in remarks prepared for the evening meeting at the Latchis Theatre.

Agency officials were scheduled to outline to the public plans for what they describe as a thorough and comprehensive review that will be undertaken before any decision is made on whether to approve a license renewal for the plant.

An agency spokeswoman said the staff will describe the NRC's review process, specifically the safety review portion of the review. The staff also planned to explain how the public can participate in the regulatory process.

The current operating license for Vermont Yankee expires on March 21, 2012. Last month, plant operator Entergy submitted an application for the renewal of the license for up to an additional 20 years.

The review process consists of four major components – a safety review, plant inspections, an independent review by the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards, and an environmental review.

Members of the public have numerous opportunities to participate in the process. The first is a 60-day opportunity to request a hearing. The onset of that period will be announced in a Federal Register Notice, as well as a press release. The Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards also will hold a meeting at NRC headquarters in Rockville, Md., to discuss the Safety Evaluation. That meeting is open for public observation. Finally, any formal meeting held with the company during the safety review process will be noticed and open to the public for observation.

Separately, as part of the environmental review, the NRC conducts a scoping meeting to collect public comments to help define the scope of the environmental review. The public can also participate in a public meeting to discuss the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement Public Meeting or provide comments via email or regular mail during the 75-day comment period.

"The NRC considers public involvement in, and information about our activities to be a cornerstone of strong, fair regulation of the nuclear industry," said Eads.

The NRC review process is expected to take 22 months if there is no adjudicatory hearing and 30 months with a hearing.

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