



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road, King of Prussia, Pa.

www.nrc.gov

No. I-06-047

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August 21, 2006

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NRC ISSUES SAFETY EVALUATION REPORT WITH OPEN ITEMS FOR OYSTER CREEK LICENSE RENEWAL APPLICATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued its Safety Evaluation Report with Open Items for the proposed renewal of the operating license for the Oyster Creek nuclear power plant. In the report, the staff concludes there are no safety concerns that would preclude renewal of the license, provided the open items are resolved.

AmerGen Energy Co., LLC, submitted an application to the NRC in July 2005 to extend the Oyster Creek license by 20 years. The plant, which is located in Lacey Township (Ocean County), N.J., is operated by AmerGen. Its current 40-year operating license is scheduled to expire on April 19, 2009.

Publication of the Safety Evaluation Report with Open Items is another milestone in the NRC's review of the application. In a letter dated Aug. 18, Frank P. Gillespie, Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation's Division of License Renewal, provided AmerGen with the report and requested responses to the Open Items identified in the document by Oct. 20.

All of the Open Items deal with corrosion issues involving the plant's drywell. The drywell is a steel shell shaped like an inverted lightbulb that surrounds the reactor vessel. It is designed to confine steam that would be released during a severe accident and direct it downwards to a suppression pool, where it would be cooled and condensed into water. In some cases, the NRC staff is seeking additional information regarding the company's efforts to mitigate corrosion on the drywell. In others, it is asking that specific steps be taken to confirm the thickness and integrity of the component.

A complete and revised Safety Evaluation Report will be issued by Dec. 1.

The report and the license renewal application have also been provided to the NRC's Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards (ACRS), an independent body of experts that advises the NRC on reactor safety matters. An ACRS subcommittee is expected to discuss the Safety Evaluation Report with Open Items during a meeting in October. The meeting, which will take place at NRC Headquarters in Rockville, Md., will be open to the public and will be announced on the agency's web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/public-involve/public-meetings/index.cfm>. The full ACRS will later issue a report discussing the results of its review.

A copy of the Safety Evaluation Report with Open Items is available in the NRC's Agencywide Documents Access and Management Systems (ADAMS) under accession number ML062300330. ADAMS is accessible via the agency's web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> . Help in using ADAMS is available by contacting the NRC's Public Document Room at 1-800-397-4209 or 301-415-4737, or by e-mail at PDR@NRC.GOV .

Additional information concerning license renewal in general and the Oyster Creek application in particular can be found at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reactors/operating/licensing/renewal.html> .

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