

Duke, Progress OK new merger target

By Emery P. Dalesio
The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. — Progress Energy and Duke Energy have agreed July will be the new deadline for completing their merger to create the country's largest electric utility.

The companies said in a

filing last week to the Securities and Exchange Commission they agreed to forgo an initial termination date in the merger agreement until July. The deal was valued at \$13.7 billion when it was announced one year ago.

"The merger agreement provided for 18

months total time period. This filing indicated we have mutually agreed to extend that to the full 18 months," Duke Energy spokesman Tom Williams said Tuesday. "We could go beyond 18 months if needed if the companies agree to an extension."

The companies had

pressed to complete their deal by the end of 2011. That target was upset when the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission said the utilities haven't done enough to protect competition in North and South Carolina.

Duke and Progress said last month that revising

their deal to satisfy regulators would take until March at the earliest, but both remained committed to completing the deal.

They proposed selling excess electricity at a fixed price to wholesale buyers in the Carolinas. Regulators said last month that didn't go far enough.