

NRC to hold open house at nuclear station

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SENECA — The Nuclear Regulatory Commission will hold an open house next week to discuss the 2017 safety performance of the Oconee Nuclear Station, which one NRC official said is “among our best-performing plants.”

The meeting is scheduled from 6-7 p.m. Tuesday at the World of Energy at 7812 Rochester Highway, adjacent to the three reactors at the nuclear station. The public is invited to attend.

Joey Ledford, spokesman for the NRC's Region II office in Atlanta, said the open house is an annual event and nothing out of the ordinary.

“It's an assessment meeting,” Ledford said. “We have one at every plant every year.”

NRC employees responsible for plant inspections, including the resident inspectors based full-time at the Oconee site, will be available to discuss the performance of the nuclear station in 2017. Inspections are performed by three NRC resident inspectors and inspection specialists from the NRC Region II office, according to a statement released by the commission this week.

Ledford said the Oconee plant was rated in a category called Column 1, “which we consider among our best-performing plants.”

“They have met all of our regulatory objectives and they will continue through this year to have what we call baseline inspections, which means no additional oversight beyond what's normal,” Ledford said.

The statement said the NRC inspec-

tors concluded that the Oconee plant operated in a manner that “preserved public health and safety during 2017.” The normal level of inspections and oversight still includes thousands of hours of inspection each year, according to the statement.

Duke Energy South Carolina nuclear communications manager Chris Rimel said 2017 was an “exceptional” year for the Oconee plant, noting that Oconee Unit 2 set a fleet record operation run of 717 days without production interruption last year.

“We appreciate the NRC's oversight tied with our Oconee Nuclear Station's mission of producing safe and always-on nuclear energy,” Rimel said. “We are proud to be part of the Upstate for nearly 50 years and look forward to decades to come.”