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for human error.

"This reduction can best be accomplished by improved written procedures, adequate pre-job briefings, more awareness of individual work activities, independent verification, and other controls," said Joe Shea, director of the fuel facility inspection division of the NRC.

Following NRC's report, NFS administrators presented information on the facility's recently implemented "safety culture" and human performance initiatives, a plan that the NRC required of NFS after the facility was found to have a deficient safety culture in 2007.

"I'm conservatively optimistic about the progress that has been made and the direction that NFS is heading," said NFS President Dave Kudsin.

Kudsin reported a renewed commitment to safety and an improvement in accountability through increased corporate oversight and the implementation of a new ethics program with all NFS employees. Regarding the latter, Kudsin said that all employees have received training to recognize and report any incident with the potential to impact the safe operations of the plant.

"All of our employees now have an additional avenue to report ethical or compliance related issues anonymously," Kudsin said.

Tim Lindstrom, vice president of operations with NFS, talked about specific programs that NFS has implemented to address the safety culture of the plant.

"Human performance is really the cornerstone of our safety culture effort," Lindstrom said. "It is a program that is designed to minimize the impact of human error. It's designed to identify procedural error traps and areas where we have not formalized our processes through procedures."

## **NRC gives NFS positive review**

by Anna Johnson  
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Officials with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) met with Nuclear Fuel Services (NFS) administrators on Sept. 24 for a public meeting to discuss their license performance review completed earlier this year.

The review was conducted from July 2008 through April 2009. NRC reported that they witnessed continued progress in four of five performance areas.

The performance area that the NRC cited as needing most improvement was that of safety operations, explaining that additional management attention is needed to reduce the potential

Lindstrom said that NFS has taken measures to better manage both routine and non-routine areas, and to implement a corrective action program to self-identify and address recurring problems.

Regarding the corrective action program, Lindstrom reported that employee safety awareness has improved over the past five years. All reported problems are screened daily and prioritized according to their risk level, he said.

NRC officials noted the facility's improvement.

"NFS is making progress, and that's a positive point," said Mike Webber, director of the office of nuclear materials safety and safeguards with the NRC. "Nevertheless, we are identifying areas for you that warrant additional attention on your part beyond safety culture."

Webber also commented on NFS's new commercial development line, commending the facility for its care in implementing the new processing line.

"We saw a lot of care being taken on your part to ensure that you did it right, to ensure that the operators were ready, to ensure the equipment was in place, to ensure that you could safely operate that new process line," said Webber, adding that this will be taken into consideration in NRC's next review.

A second NRC assessment on the "safety culture" initiative at NFS is underway and will be completed in 2010.

Several residents were in attendance at Thursday's meeting and raised questions following the formal review. One comment, the request for the NRC to conduct an environmental impact study (EIS), earned applause from those in attendance.

"Can we have an EIS, an environmental impact study? Because everybody here is worried about what's in the air, what's in the water, what's in the groundwater, what's in the drinking water, what's in our bodies, what's in our genetic problems, what's happening as far as the effluents and processes at the NFS site," said Erwin resident Chris Tipton. "Considering NFS has asked for a 40-year extension of license renewal, which I think is totally absurd, we absolutely deserve an EIS."

NRC officials said that they would look into the possibility of conducting such a study and would also research the answers to other questions raised at the meeting.

The NRC will hold another public meeting at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 29, at Erwin Town Hall, at which time they will address issues raised at Thursday's meeting as well as the public meeting held in May.