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NRC STAFF RATES GINNA "GOOD" IN THREE AREAS
AND "EXCELLENT" IN ONE CATEGORY ON LATEST SALP REPORT

The R. E. Ginna Nuclear Plant has received performance ratings of "good" in operations, maintenance and engineering and "excellent" in plant support in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) of the facility.

The SALP report was sent October 11 to Rochester Gas and Electric Company (RG&E), which operates the plant near Rochester, New York. It evaluates the plant's performance from March 12, 1995, through August 24 of this year.

NRC and RG&E officials will discuss the report during a meeting scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on October 29 in the Training Center at the Ginna site. The meeting will be open for public observation and NRC officials will be available afterward to speak with reporters and members of the public.

NRC assessment reports rate licensees in four functional areas - plant operations, engineering, maintenance and plant support - and assign Category 1, 2 or 3 depending on whether performance in those areas was superior, good or adequate.

In a letter to RG&E, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller said NRC saw generally good safety performance at Ginna, but he noted that the level of performance declined somewhat from the previous SALP period. He said the plant's steam generator replacement project was "exceptionally well managed and safely performed," but that other activities reflected less consistent performance.

"Management actions reflected a strong safety perspective early in the period," Mr. Miller wrote, "but the operating philosophy did not appear to be consistently conservative toward the end of the period. Several equipment issues were not aggressively addressed...."

He also cited challenges to the plant organization by significant program and organizational changes. "Management of change represents an ongoing challenge to the company," Mr. Miller said.

The administrator had these comments on Ginna's performance in the four rated categories:

OPERATIONS

"Performance in plant operations declined and was rated Category 2. Operator response to plant transients, startups and shutdowns continued to be good. However, degraded material condition, equipment failures, and some program changes, particularly implementation of Improved Technical Specifications, challenged the operators. Some lapses in system and equipment configuration control were evident. While operations effectively controlled the refueling outages and steam generator replacement activities, problems were noted with operator performance and work control effectiveness during forced outages. Lapses in conservative philosophy were noted late in the period as reflected by the lack of aggressively addressing several equipment issues."

MAINTENANCE

"In general, maintenance activities were well performed. However, some significant cases of poor work practices and weak procedures were noted, indicating past actions to address these weaknesses have not been entirely effective. Occasions of weak interface between engineering, operations, and maintenance were also evident, particularly in support of emergent maintenance issues. Surveillance activities were well implemented. The problem identification and root cause processes were generally effective for specific equipment failures or performance issues, but had not yet matured to encompass evaluation across multiple problems or events to identify common themes or causes."

ENGINEERING

"Performance in engineering also declined and was rated Category 2. Strong performance was noted in all aspects of the planning, work coordination, contractor and test control, and management oversight in support of the 1996 refueling outage activities and [steam generator replacement program]. The [replacement program] was very successful; the installation of the new steam generators was accomplished without major technical problems and was followed by an excellent post-modification test program. However, engineering performance regarding some important programs declined compared to past performance. Engineering performance concerning the motor operator valve (MOV) program was weak throughout the period. Also, the Service Water System Reliability Optimization Program. . . had not been kept current to reflect service water system changes made in the last three years, and the results of many completed heat exchanger thermal performance tests required by [that program] had not been fully evaluated."

PLANT SUPPORT

"We noted improved performance in the plant support functions and this area was rated Category 1. All plant support functions related to the [steam generator replacement program] were well-coordinated and of very high quality. Exposure reduction efforts and radiological controls were excellent. Particularly noteworthy was the fact that the [program] was completed with the second lowest personnel exposure per steam generator when compared to all nuclear power plants that have replaced steam generators. The effluent controls, environmental monitoring, and security programs remained strong. Emergency preparedness was very good, except with respect to call-out drills."