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NRC ESTABLISHES POLICY FOR REGULATORY ACTIONS FOR NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS THAT ARE NOT "Y2K READY"

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has approved a policy to guide regulatory actions for nuclear power plant licensees that did not report that their facilities were "Y2K ready" by July 1.

The new policy, which applies to those 35 plants that were not Y2K ready as of July 1, provides for regulatory actions to be taken sufficiently in advance of the December 31 to January 1 transition to assure that nuclear power plants will be in a stable, safe condition during the Y2K rollover date.

Under the new policy, for those plants with a projected Y2K item completion date between July 1 and September 30, (about 13 plants) the NRC will continue to monitor licensees' progress, verify completion of remaining Y2K-related activities, and document results in NRC inspection reports.

The degree of additional NRC scrutiny for the remaining plants (about 22) will depend on the nature of the work that needs to be completed to be Y2K-ready.

- Plants with non-safety, support systems and components that are not Y2K-ready or plants that have incomplete contingency plans for these systems could require additional meetings, audits, or requests for additional information. There are about 10 plants in this category.
- Plants with non-safety systems that affect power operation that are Y2K-ready or those plants that have incomplete contingency plans for these systems will be subject to additional regulatory actions which may include issuance of an order requiring specific actions by the licensee. There are about 12 plants in this category.

By September 30, NRC will make a final determination whether additional regulatory action is warranted to address Y2K readiness issues. At this time, NRC believes that all licensees will be able to operate their plants safely during the transition from 1999 to 2000, and that NRC-directed plant-specific action will not be needed.

All 103 operating nuclear power plants reported July 1 that their plant safety systems were Y2K-ready and that there were no remaining Y2K-related problems that could directly affect the performance of safety systems or the capability for safe shutdown of the reactor. In addition, 68 of these plants reported they had completed, as the next order of priority, Y2K-readiness work for all of their computer systems that support plant operation. The remaining 35

plants reported that, to be fully Y2K-ready, they still had additional work to complete on a few non-safety computer systems or devices.

For about one half of the 35 plants, some work remains on systems needed for power generation. Other plants must perform remediation on plant monitoring and administrative systems. Typically, the remaining Y2K work will be completed during a scheduled plant outage in the fall or delayed while awaiting the delivery of a replacement component. In each case, the licensees with work remaining have provided satisfactory schedules for completing the work.

Current Status of Nuclear Power Plant Y2K Readiness

The plants that have Y2K work remaining are continuing to progress toward Y2K readiness. As of August 1, five more plants have reported that they are Y2K-ready bringing the total to 73 operating nuclear power plants that are fully Y2K-ready. This reduces to 30 the number of plants that have remaining work on non-safety systems and components to be fully Y2K-ready.

The "Year 2000" or Y2K problem refers to computers' potential inability to recognize dates beginning with January 1, 2000, and beyond. It arises from computer programs that use two-digit numbers to represent a calendar year (such as "98" for 1998). For example, computer systems could read "00" as 1900, rather than 2000, potentially causing computer systems to malfunction. "Y2K-ready" means that functions provided by computer systems will be carried out successfully with the coming of the Year 2000.

Additional information on the policy can be found in a staff paper, SECY-99-162, on NRC's Y2K web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRC/NEWS/year2000.html.

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