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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC STAFF SCHEDULES PUBLIC MEETING JUNE 14 TO DESCRIBE
NEW NRC INSPECTION PROGRAM FOR PRAIRIE ISLAND NUCLEAR STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will describe a significantly new pilot inspection and assessment program for the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Station in a public meeting on Monday, June 14 in Red Wing, Minnesota. The plant is located near Red Wing.

The meeting will be at 6 p.m. in the Red Wing Public Library, 225 East Avenue, Red Wing, Minnesota. The meeting will include a description of the new program and an opportunity for questions and comments from the public.

The Prairie Island plant, operated by Northern States Power Company, is one of nine in a pilot program which began June 1 to test and adjust the new program. Following the six-month trial, the program is expected to be extended next year to all 103 commercial nuclear power reactors.

The NRC developed the new reactor inspection and assessment program to use its resources more effectively and efficiently. The changes reflect improvements in nuclear power plant safety performance over the past 20 years. Plants that perform well will have less regulatory oversight than plants that have problems.

A "core" inspection program will continue for all nuclear plants with NRC resident inspectors on site supplemented by specialists from one of four NRC regional offices. If performance declines at a plant, the NRC will step up its regulatory activities for that plant.

The new assessment program will focus in part on performance indicators -- statistics that show how the plants are performing. In addition, NRC inspectors will monitor a number of plant activities that are not measured by the indicators. The inspections will pay particular attention to how well the plant staff finds and fixes problems.

The pilot inspection and assessment program began this month at nine power plant sites -- Hope Creek and Salem in New Jersey, FitzPatrick in New York, Prairie Island in Minnesota, Quad Cities in Illinois, Shearon Harris in North Carolina, Sequoyah in Tennessee, and Fort Calhoun and Cooper in Nebraska.

A fuller description of the new inspection and oversight

program is available on the NRC's internet web site at:
<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/primer.htm>. Questions may also be
addressed by e-mail to opa@nrc.gov.

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