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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC STAFF SCHEDULES PUBLIC MEETING FOR JUNE 30 TO DESCRIBE AGENCY'S NEW INSPECTION PROGRAM FOR FITZPATRICK NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will describe a significantly new pilot inspection and assessment program for the James A. FitzPatrick nuclear power plant in a public meeting on Wednesday, June 30.

The meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the Econo Lodge Hotel, 70 E. First St., Oswego, N.Y. It will include a description of the new program and an opportunity for questions and comments from members of the public.

FitzPatrick, which is located in Scriba, N.Y., and operated by the New York Power Authority, is one of nine plants taking part 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.

A baseline inspection program will continue for all other 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 identifies and fixes problems.

The pilot inspection and assessment program began this month at nine power plant sites. In addition to FitzPatrick, they include: Salem and Hope Creek in New Jersey, 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 to: opa@nrc.gov

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