No. 93-85 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tel. 301/504-2240 (Thursday, June 24, 1993)

NRC CHANGES TIME LIMITS FOR MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS OF MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission is amending its regulations governing monitoring programs to evaluate the effectiveness of maintenance programs at licensed nuclear power plants. The amendment changes the time interval for conducting evaluations from once every year to at least once every refueling cycle with the maximum amount of time between evaluations not to exceed 24 months.

The amendment is consistent with an earlier change to the NRC's requirements where the frequency of required power-reactor licensee reports updating Final Safety Analysis Reports was changed from annually to once per refueling cycle. In that case, the Commission found that the use of a fuel-cycle interval provided a more coordinated and cohesive update since a majority of design changes and major modifications are performed during refueling outages.

In addition, officials of the Nuclear Management and Resources Council (NUMARC) suggested, in a public meeting with the NRC staff in February 1992, that the NRC should consider assessments of maintenance program effectiveness based on a refueling cycle rather than annual interval. The NUMARC officials pointed out that:

-- assessment data collected during a refueling cycle would be more meaningful as some important data can be obtained only from surveillance tests performed with the reactor shutdown during a refueling cycle;

-- adjustments to maintenance activities that may be made after such an evaluation typically would be performed after a refueling outage; and

-- the evaluation is a time-consuming process; that the insufficient data available on an annual basis would not provide for meaningful evaluations by licensees; and that annual evaluations would be difficult for utilities which own multi-unit sites having common or shared equipment.

The amendment to Part 50 of the Commission's regulations will become effective on July 10.