No. 92-165 Tel. 301-504-2240 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (Monday, November 9, 1992)

AVERAGE RADIATION DOSE TO WORKERS AT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS DECLINES SIGNIFICANTLY COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEAR

The average radiation dose, per reactor, to workers at Nuclear Regulatory Commission-licensed nuclear power plants in the United States declined by 24 percent in 1991 compared to 1990 dose levels.

A report on "LWR Occupational Dose Data for 1991" shows the average collective radiation dose per reactor for 1991 was 253 person-rem, down from 333 person-rem in 1990 and the lowest average dose in 22 years (when the average dose for seven operating light-water reactors was 178 person-rem). For 1991, there were 111 light-water reactors which were included in the operating reactor data base.

All the operating commercial nuclear power plants in the United States are light-water reactors of two types--boiling water reactors (BWRs) and pressurized water reactors (PWRs). For BWRs, the 1991 average collective dose per reactor was 314 person-rem, 26 percent lower than the average dose of 426 personrem per reactor recorded in 1990. For PWRs, the average radiation dose per unit was 223 person-rem, a 22 percent decrease from the 285 person-rem per reactor recorded in 1990.

The average measurable radiation dose per worker for lightwater reactors was 0.29 rem (290 millirems) in 1991 compared to 0.34 rem (340 millirems) in 1990. This average dose per worker in 1991 is less than the average worker dose of 0.66 rem (660 millirems) reported in 1983. In the same time period, 1983 to 1991, the average dose per reactor has dropped by 500 personrems, from 753 person-rem in 1983 to 253 person-rem in 1991.

Doses received during plant outages accounted for more than 87 percent of the annual collective dose for the 11 units with the highest doses in 1991. According to the report, the activities which most frequently contributed to these high collective doses were valve maintenance and repair, in-service inspection work, control rod drive replacement and repair, installation and removal of scaffolding and insulation and refueling activities. The report concludes that one way to reduce a plant's annual collective dose is to reduce the frequency and duration of plant outages by detailed outage planning and scheduling of jobs to minimize critical path time.

Copies of the report are available for inspection and copying in the NRC Public Document Room, 2120 L Street, N.W., in Washington, D.C.

#

Attachment