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SIX-MONTH PLANT PERFORMANCE REVIEW RESULTS
NOW AVAILABLE TO LICENSEES AND PUBLIC

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has begun sending its licensees and making publicly available the results of semiannual performance reviews of the nation's 109 licensed nuclear power reactors.

Every six months, each of the four NRC regional offices conducts a comprehensive review of each plant's performance, which NRC regional managers use, as needed, to modify plant-specific inspection plans.

NRC utilizes these reviews both to assess nuclear power plant performance more objectively and to plan future inspections based on those assessments. Regional offices have been conducting these reviews of plant performance at least semiannually for the past two years. At the discretion of the regional administrator, performance may be reviewed more frequently (typically quarterly) for plants of concern.

NRC regions use the information from this process in planning for inspections during the coming four to six months, increasing or decreasing the number and scope of inspections. Until recently, these inspection planning decisions were not formally communicated to licensees in a public document.

But now, licensees are being informed of the performance review-based inspection schedule through a letter from the regional administrator. This letter shows inspections to be performed over the ensuing six months, those in NRC's basic core inspection program and — based on the performance review — any additional specific inspections the regional administrator and his staff believe necessary. A copy of this letter is available in NRC public document rooms. NRC also may hold a meeting with utility officials to discuss the performance review results. Any such meetings will be open for public observation.

In addition to the six-month performance review, the NRC staff is testing the use of a new method for documenting routine nuclear power plant inspections. In this approach, a single, consolidated inspection report is issued, combining the findings

of several different inspections performed during a four to six-week period.

This method — now being used with about 30 percent of the nation's licensed power reactors — is being evaluated as a replacement for the long-standing practice of issuing a separate report for each individual inspection, whether done by NRC resident inspectors based at a plant site or by specialist inspectors who travel to a plant from a regional office or from NRC headquarters.

NRC believes this new approach will send licensees a more consistent message about inspection findings and provide both NRC and the utilities a more coordinated view of overall safety performance on a continuing basis. Separate reports will continue to be published for such special activities as incident investigations, augmented inspections, or diagnostic evaluations.

Both these initiatives — issuance of the six-month performance review-based inspection plans and potential changes in the inspection format — are part of a larger effort by the NRC staff to develop a more comprehensive nuclear power plant monitoring and evaluation program.

The staff is beginning a program that will provide a check on the effectiveness of all the tools NRC uses in assessing plant performance — including routine inspections, six-month performance reviews, and the systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP). This program, known as the Integrated Performance Assessment Process, will be a long-term effort which eventually will evaluate the effectiveness of these regulatory approaches at all licensed plants.

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