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Tel. 301/504-2240

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FEDERAL FIELD EXERCISE AT NUCLEAR PLANT IN
PENNSYLVANIA HAS BEEN CANCELLED

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission and Federal Emergency Management Agency have agreed to cancel a planned Federal Field Exercise at a nuclear plant in Pennsylvania because of the high resource demands on FEMA in responding to recent natural disasters throughout the country.

The NRC and FEMA are sponsors of the Federal Field Exercise No. 3 (FFE-3) which was to take place at the Susquehanna Nuclear Plant near Berwick, PA, February 22-25, 1993. The exercise would have involved about 2000 people from federal agencies, state and local governments, the Pennsylvania Power and Light Company, and nuclear insurance representatives.

FEMA informed the NRC on October 16, 1992 that it would be unable to participate in the exercise because of the severe workload and resource burdens at FEMA due to multiple recent natural disasters--primarily hurricanes Andrew in Florida and Louisiana, hurricane Iniki in Hawaii, typhoon Omar in Guam and other disasters. After considering the possibility of reduced FEMA participation in the exercise, the decision was made October 21, 1992 to cancel. A decision on when and where to conduct a subsequent Federal Field Exercise will be made at a later date.

Officials agree that the planning and coordination which started in 1991 have provided substantial benefits to the organizations involved. The work groups involved in the exercise planning will document for future use in exercises or actual emergencies the improved procedures and plans that have been developed for FFE-3.

James Taylor, Executive Director for Operations at NRC, said that "Participants from State and local organizations, the utility and other Federal agencies all deserve high praise for the great effort they put into preparing for this exercise. The products of their work will be extremely useful in years ahead."

This was to be the third Federal Field Exercise conducted at nuclear plants in the U.S. The other two were held at the St.

Lucie plant in Florida in 1984 and the Zion plant in Illinois in 1987. Federal Field Exercises are conducted to provide the full range of Federal, State, local and utility participants with firsthand experience in efforts to achieve prompt and coordinated action for protecting public health and safety in the event of a severe accident, though the probability is low that one would occur.

The State of Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Power and Light Co. volunteered to host the exercise after NRC indicated it wanted to conduct the third FFE under its Region I office at King of Prussia, Pa. Two of its five regions had already conducted such exercises.

Each of the Nation's nuclear power plants conducts annual onsite exercises to test response personnel and their emergency plans and every two years they are joined by local and state governments around the plant. The Federal Field exercises involve larger numbers of people and participating organizations and are conducted over several days, whereas the annual and biennial exercises are normally completed in one day. Lessons learned from each exercise are incorporated into future plans and scenarios and are used to build a solid foundation for responding in the unlikely event of a major nuclear accident anywhere in the United States.

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Note to Editors: This basic information is also being issued by FEMA Headquarters, the State of Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania Power and Light Company.