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OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT RATED "GOOD" IN THREE AREAS, "SUPERIOR" IN FOURTH AREA OF NRC ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station received performance ratings of "good" in three areas and "superior" in the fourth area of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) of the facility.

The SALP report was sent yesterday (January 9) to GPU Nuclear Corporation (BG&E), which operates the facility in Lacy Township, NJ. It evaluates the plant's performance from June 25, 1995, through November 30, 1996.

The NRC staff will meet with officials of GPU to discuss the SALP at 1 p.m. on January 27 in the Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station Training Building, at the site. It will be open for public observation.

NRC SALP reports rate licensees in four functional areas — plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support — and assign ratings of Category 1, 2 or 3 depending on whether performance in those areas was superior, good or adequate. This report gives Oyster Creek a Category 2 (good) rating in operations, maintenance and plant support, and a Category 1 rating in engineering, indicating "suprior" performance.

In a letter to GPU, NRC Regional Administrator Hubert J. Miller said the NRC noted continued, generally good safety performance during the SALP period.

He continued, "The problem identification and corrective action processes generally have been good; however, corrective actions for personnel errors, particularly in the operations area, have not been fully effective. The operations rating decreased due to continuing human performance errors that resulted in challenges to the plant and a significant plant configuration control event."

Mr. Miller had these comments on the specific categories:

OPERATIONS

Overall operations performance was good, and operators generally responded well to off-normal and transient conditions. However

where routine activities are concerned, inconsistent implementation of the self-checking (STAR) program contributed to continuing human performance problems. This was particularly evident in the unplanned release of 133,000 gallons of slightly radioactive water to the discharge canal. The NRC also observed that a number of human performance errors involved elements of inadequate supervisory oversight and weaknesses in configuration controls.

MAINTENANCE

Similarly, human performance weaknesses detracted from otherwise strong performance in the maintenance area. Errors involving poor work practices and inattention to detail continued to be observed during the period. The material condition of the plant, though, was generally good. The lack of significant repetitive equipment failures indicated that maintenance was effectively addressing degraded conditions. Maintenance planning, the corrective maintenance backlog, and self-assessment efforts were all well-managed. The NRC determined that overall performance in maintenance had improved.

ENGINEERING

Engineering support to the plant was of high quality and consistent with performance in the previous SALP period. Engineering management oversight and involvement in emerging issues was a strength. Systems engineers provided strong continuous support to plant operations. Engineering evaluations were generally very good with thorough root-cause analyses and good corrective actions. However, examples were noted where design documents were not used constructively and revisions not made to them after plant modifications. Higher sensitivity is needed regarding the maintenance and use of design documents and the licensing basis in the Updated Final Safety Analysis Report. Self-assessments were effective, and experience from efforts at Three Mile Island (which also is operated by GPU), such as in the service water system review and the motor-operated valve program, was applied to Oyster Creek.

PLANT SUPPORT

The Radiation Protection Program was generally effective in protecting the public and workers from radiation. The ALARA Program reduced radiation exposure to workers, but worker exposure reduction remains a significant challenge for the facility. Good effluent controls and environmental monitoring programs were maintained. In the plant security area, management supported enhancements to hardware and equipment; however, some personnel performance lapses occurred. In Emergency Preparedness (EP), the licensee maintained a good EP program with good management oversight; however, there were some deficiencies in program administration. The last exercise was assessed as good. Fire Protection measures were very good during the period.

EDITORS: A copy of the SALP report is available from this office, or on the NRC's Internet web site (www.nrc.gov/OPA), or by e-mail subscription. To receive SALP reports by e-mail, send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with the following message: subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname.

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