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NRC STAFF RATES VERMONT YANKEE "GOOD" IN THREE AREAS, "SUPERIOR" IN ONE AREA IN LATEST ASSESSMENT

The Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power 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 (March 5) to Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation, which operates the facility in Vernon, Vt. It evaluates the plant's performance from July 16, 1995, through January 18, 1997.

The NRC staff will meet with Vermont Yankee officials to discuss the SALP at 3 p.m. on March 12 in the Vernon Town Hall. It will be open for public observation.

NRC SALP reports rate licensee performance in four functional areas — plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support — and assign ratings of Category 1 (superior), 2 (good) or 3 (adequate). This report gives Vermont Yankee a Category 2 (good) rating in operations, maintenance and engineering, and a Category 1 rating in plant support, indicating "superior" performance.

In a letter to Vermont Yankee, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller said, "Vermont Yankee's overall performance remained essentially constant over the course of this SALP period. Operators performed well during planned evolutions and unplanned transients. While performance in the area of problem identification was somewhat mixed, improvements were noted, particularly regarding identification of problems related to design basis conformance and engineering program adequacy. In addition, some improvements were noted in the material condition of the plant as indicated by a reduction in plant trips and transients caused by equipment problems. Radiological controls and other plant support programs continued to be implemented effectively."

Mr. Miller continued, "Notwithstanding these performance improvements, human performance problems continued to be noted. For example, maintenance and modification activities resulted in several unexpected plant challenges due to poor communications and coordination among the maintenance, operations, and engineering staffs. Also, weaknesses were found in surveillance test procedure adequacy and adherence. Further, inconsistencies were noted in the scope and depth of root cause analyses and in the prioritization of corrective actions.

SALP reports are available on