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I-96-61
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September 16, 1996
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC STAFF RATES TMI 1 "SUPERIOR" IN TWO CATEGORIES AND
"GOOD" IN TWO CATEGORIES IN LATEST SALP

Three Mile Island Unit 1 has received performance ratings of "superior" in operations and maintenance and "good" in engineering and plant support in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) of the facility.

The SALP report was sent September 13 to GPU Nuclear Corporation, which operates the plant near Middletown, Pennsylvania. It evaluates the plant's performance from February 19, 1995, through August 3 of this year.

NRC and GPU officials will discuss the report during a meeting set for 1:00 on September 30 in the Training Center at the TMI site. The meeting will be open for public observation and NRC officials will be available afterward to speak with members of the public.

NRC assessment reports rate licensees in four functional areas - plant operations, engineering, maintenance and plant support - and assign Category 1, 2 or 3 depending on whether their performance in those areas was superior, good or adequate.

In a letter to GPU, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller, said, "Overall, the NRC continued to observe good safety performance at the Three Mile Island Plant, Unit 1. Performance continued to be strong in the Maintenance area and improved performance was noted in the Operations area; however, performance declined in the areas of Engineering and Plant Support due in part to poor management oversight of program implementation in several areas."

Mr. Miller has these comments on Three Mile Island's performance in the four rated categories:

OPERATIONS

Management oversight of emerging plant operational issues was excellent and was a significant improvement. Senior plant management shifted toward a very conservative decision-making process with the proper emphasis on plant and personnel safety.

Licensed operator performance and training were strengths. Operations activities conducted during the refueling outage were very well planned with improvement noted from the previous outage. The senior reactor operators exhibited mixed performance related to the evaluation of degraded technical specification equipment. Human performance evaluation was made a high priority by senior management.

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance and surveillance activities continued to be well performed with a well trained staff and appropriate management involvement. Some personnel errors and weaknesses in the planning process occurred but improvement was noted toward the end of the assessment period. Several of these errors may have been prevented through better self-checking.

ENGINEERING

Engineering communications and planning have remained strengths. The quality of design change activities and engineering's response to technical issues declined from the last SALP in that it varied significantly. Engineering performance in programmatic activities also declined. Performance in design basis documentation and updated final safety analysis report (UFSAR) updating programs was very good; however, performance in oversight of the motor-operated valve testing program exhibited significant weaknesses.

PLANT SUPPORT

The radiation protection program was effectively implemented, including successful performance noted in review of ALARA program results. However, some radiation worker performance issues were noted in adhering to high radiation area controls and contamination monitoring. Security performance declined as indicated by two occurrences involving problems with maintaining the integrity of protected area barriers. The emergency preparedness program performance was good; however, performance during the last full participation exercise was mixed.

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SALP reports are available on the NRC's internet web site (<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>) and by e-mail subscription. To receive SALP reports by e-mail as they are issued, send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with the following message: subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname.