

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, IL 60532-4351

NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT: RIII-97-36
CONTACT: Jan Strasma 630/829-9663
Angela Dauginas 630/829-9662
E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov

April 10, 1997

LATEST NRC STAFF REVIEW RATES KEWAUNEE NUCLEAR PLANT "SUPERIOR" IN MAINTENANCE
"GOOD" IN PLANT OPERATIONS, ENGINEERING, AND PLANT SUPPORT

The Kewaunee Nuclear Power Plant, operated by Wisconsin Public Service Company, has received performance ratings of "superior" in maintenance and "good" in plant operations, engineering, and plant support, the four areas of review in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff's latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) report for the facility. The plant is located in Carlton, Wisconsin.

The assessment covers the period from February 19, 1995, through February 15 of this year.

The NRC staff and Wisconsin Public Service Company officials will discuss the evaluation during a meeting set for 9:00 a.m. on April 30 at Carlton Town Hall, N1296 Town Hall Road. The Carlton Town Hall is located on the corner of County Highway G and Town Hall Road.

The meeting will be open to public observation. NRC officials will be available afterwards to speak with reporters, state and local officials, and members of the public.

NRC SALP reports rate utilities in four functional areas -- plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support -- and assign ratings of Category 1, 2, or 3 depending on whether their performance in those areas is superior, good or acceptable. The report on Kewaunee gives the plant a "Category 1" rating -- indicating superior performance -- in maintenance and a "Category 2" rating -- indicating good performance -- in operations, engineering, and plant support.

NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach, in a letter to the utility, noted that "conduct of nuclear activities at Kewaunee, while very good overall, declined in comparison to the previous assessment period."

"The decline," he said, "was due to a series of operator errors, deficiencies in the quality of engineering support, and weak response to challenges being faced in radiological controls."

"Overall plant materiel condition was very good and safety related equipment, in particular, was in excellent condition. This reflected the combined efforts of the operations department, a skilled maintenance staff, and an effective planning group. Positive attributes were also evident in chemistry, emergency preparedness and security."

Mr. Beach said a decline in the plant's operations performance began to be indicated by a series of operator errors that occurred during the latter half of the rating period. Although Wisconsin Public Service initiated corrective actions for this condition, he added, it did not do so until after a clear pattern of operator errors had been established and the NRC had raised concerns in that area.

He further told the utility:

"A few notable deficiencies were also observed in the quality of engineering support. These were typified by weaknesses identified in the implementation of some equipment performance monitoring programs and in the untimely resolution of identified deficiencies. Additionally, the effectiveness of the corrective action program in the various functional areas was inconsistent. Deficiencies in the radiological controls area were not well documented and resolution on many engineering issues was not timely."

<u>Functional Area</u>	<u>Current Period</u>	<u>Previous Period</u>
Operations	2	1
Maintenance	1	1
Engineering	2	1
Plant Support	2	1

#

SALP reports may be viewed on the NRC's internet web site at <<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>>. The reports for all plants may be obtained by e-mail, as issued. Send an e-mail message to listproc@nrc.gov with no subject and the following message: subscribe SALP yourfirstname yourlastname.