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NRC SUSPENDS SALP PROGRAM UNTIL REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS IS COMPLETED

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has suspended its Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) program for an interim period until the NRC staff completes a review of its nuclear power plant performance assessment process. At the end of the process, the Commission will decide whether to resume the SALP program or substitute something regarded as more effective.

The decision to suspend SALP is part of a larger plan to improve NRC's regulatory effectiveness. The plan represents a consolidation, refinement and acceleration of a set of ongoing initiatives in the following areas: reactor licensee performance assessment; risk-informed, performance-based regulations; reactor inspection and enforcement; licensing activities; NRC's organizational structure; and a number of specific issues requiring prompt and sound decisions.

L. Joseph Callan, NRC's Executive Director of Operations, outlined the plan in a recent memorandum to NRC Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson. It responds to issues raised in a recent congressional hearing and by other stakeholders.

Resources saved by suspending the SALP program will be used to accelerate the staff's effort to redesign its regulatory practices to reflect in a more timely and efficient manner the performance of a mature nuclear industry. The NRC staff will make recommendations to the Commission at the conclusion of the review early next year.

SALP evaluations were conducted by regional and headquarters NRC staff every 12 to 24 months to assess performance of each licensed nuclear power plant. The SALP program has been in existence for almost 20 years.

During the interim period that the SALP program is suspended, the NRC will utilize the results of its plant performance reviews to provide nuclear power plant performance information to licensees, state and local officials, and the public. These reviews are intended to identify performance trends since the previous assessment and make any appropriate changes to the NRC's inspection plans. Since beginning the

Plant Performance Review process in 1988, the NRC has continuously improved it to the point that these reviews now use similar information and address many of the objectives of the SALP program. As a result, licensee performance will be assessed in much the same way as in the SALP process, and on a more frequent basis.

NRC staff plans to inform nuclear power licensees of further details about the suspension of its SALP program in the near future.

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