

**United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road King of Prussia, PA 19406
Fax: 610/337-5241
Internet: dps@nrc.gov or nas@nrc.gov**

I-98-105

September 15, 1998

Contact: Diane Screnci (610/337-5330)
Neil A. Sheehan (610/337-5331)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC RATES SALEM NUCLEAR PLANT AS "SUPERIOR" IN TWO CATEGORIES,
"GOOD" IN TWO OTHERS, IN LATEST PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Salem nuclear power plant has received ratings of "superior" in two areas and "good" in two others, in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest assessment of the facility. Operated by Public Service Electric & Gas (PSE&G) Company, the two-reactor plant is located in Hancocks Bridge, N.J., on the Delaware River.

Covered by the most recent Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance, or SALP, report for Salem is the period from March 1, 1997, to August 1 of this year.

The report will be discussed during a meeting between NRC and PSE&G officials on Wednesday, September 30, in the Access Processing Facility at the plant. Scheduled to begin at 2 p.m., the session will be open to the public for observation. Agency staff will remain afterwards to answer questions from members of the public and media.

Four areas of plant performance are rated in the NRC SALP process, including plant operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support. Each area is assigned a rating of Category 1 ("superior"), Category 2 ("good") or Category 3 ("adequate").

SALP reports are issued about once every 18 months for each plant. However, the previous NRC assessment of Salem was issued on January 3, 1995. The interval between reports for Salem reflects a prolonged shutdown that ended for Unit 2 last year and Unit 1 earlier this year.

In its latest report, Salem was assessed as "superior" in the areas of plant operations and plant support and "good" in the areas of maintenance and engineering. While the ratings for engineering and plant support remained unchanged from the previous SALP report, Salem saw improvements in the areas of plant operations and maintenance, both of which were previously rated as "adequate."

NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller, in a letter to PSE&G regarding the report, wrote that overall performance at the plant had improved, "as demonstrated by a nearly event-free return of both units to operation following the extended outage. Performance was characterized by strong management oversight by the new management team assembled since the shutdown, safe and conservative operations and decisions, good day-to-day engineering support to operations, and sound and effective programs for independent oversight and self-assessment."

Mr. Miller also pointed out that human performance has improved significantly, but he noted personnel errors in the areas of operations and maintenance continue to warrant close management attention.

Regarding the operations area, the NRC found that a conservative approach was consistently taken. Also, the agency saw strong problem identification and self-assessment activities by both the line and oversight organization.

In the maintenance area, good equipment performance since the units came back on-line demonstrated the improved material condition of the facility. Outage work was properly planned, scheduled and implemented. Nevertheless, problems were detected in making the transition from a shutdown plant to an operating one, and human performance problems involving equipment verification and procedural adherence continued to occur.

Effective engineering support was noted in the engineering area, contributing to improved equipment reliability and plant performance. Improvements in processes were attributed primarily to good management oversight and involvement.

Lastly, plant support was characterized by excellent performance in radiation protection and well-implemented solid radwaste transportation, radioactive effluent, environmental monitoring and meteorological monitoring programs. Significant improvements were observed in emergency preparedness and security.

#

EDITOR'S NOTE: The full SALP report can be viewed on the NRC's Internet web site at www.nrc.gov.