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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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**LATEST NRC ASSESSMENT RATES POINT BEACH "GOOD" IN OPERATIONS,
MAINTENANCE, AND PLANT SUPPORT AND "ACCEPTABLE" IN ENGINEERING**

In its latest assessment of plant performance, the NRC staff noted improved performance at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Station with ratings of "good" in plant operations, maintenance, and plant support and an "acceptable" rating in engineering. The plant, which is operated by Wisconsin Electric Power Co., is located near Two Rivers, Wisconsin.

The report, called the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP), cited improvements at Point Beach even though some ratings declined from the previous report, issued in June 1996.

NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach stated that the previous report did not, in retrospect, "accurately reflect the actual performance at Point Beach in operations, maintenance, and engineering." The 1996 SALP report rated the plant "good" in those three categories and "superior" in plant support.

Subsequent to the issuance of the previous SALP report, both units at Point Beach were shut down for extended periods for modifications and for performance improvement activities in maintenance, engineering, and plant operations.

Beach noted, "During this assessment period, the root causes of many identified issues were directly related to longstanding weaknesses in these areas."

The NRC staff will discuss the SALP review in a meeting at 10 a.m., January 28, at the Holiday Inn in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The meeting will be open to public observation.

NRC SALP reports evaluate 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 covers the period April 28, 1996, through November 29 of last year.

Beach said, "The improvement initiatives undertaken over the last year have resulted in generally good conduct of nuclear activities at the Point Beach plant." He continued, "Much of the improvement can be attributed to the resolve and focused attention of Wisconsin Electric senior management."

He attributed the improvements in plant operations to "a strong management commitment to improve performance and to implement improved standards."

"High quality workmanship by maintenance staff is a strength at Point Beach," Beach said. He added, "Performance in engineering improved during the latter portion of the assessment period and was acceptable overall."

Summary of SALP Results:

	Previous SALP Period	Current SALP Period
Plant Operations	2	2
Maintenance	2	2
Engineering	2	3
Plant Support	1	2

Note: Plant support includes such plant activities as emergency planning, security, and radiation protection.

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Note: The full SALP report is available from the NRC Region III Office of Public Affairs or on the NRC's internet web page:
<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>