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WOLF CREEK RATED 'GOOD' IN ALL AREAS IN LATEST NRC ASSESSMENT REPORT

Wolf Creek, a nuclear power plant near Burlington, Kansas, received performance ratings of "good" in all areas -- plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support -- in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) for the facility.

The SALP report was sent Friday, May 22 to Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation, which operates the plant. The report evaluates the plant's performance from April 6, 1997, to April 18 of this year.

NRC and Wolf Creek officials will discuss the report during a meeting set for 9 a.m. Wednesday, June 17, at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Learning Center near the plant entrance. The meeting is open for public observation. NRC officials will be available afterwards to speak with reporters, state and local officials, and members of the public.

NRC systematic assessment reports rate licensees in four functional areas -- plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support -- and assigns ratings of Category 1, 2, or 3 depending on whether their performance in those areas was superior, good or acceptable. Wolf Creek was given the following scores on the current SALP and previous SALP in October 1995.

Functional areas & ratings

Plant Operations	<u>Current</u> 2	<u>Previous</u> 2
Maintenance	<u>Current</u> 2	<u>Previous</u> 2
Engineering	<u>Current</u> 2	<u>Previous</u> 3

In his cover letter to the report, NRC Regional Administrator Ellis W. Merschoff noted that safety performance in most areas had improved since the last report, although the scores, with the exception of engineering, remained the same.

In the operations area, competent performance by the control room staff was noted during both routine and nonroutine activities. "Management continued to work on establishing high performance standards at all levels of the operations organization and then ensuring that these standards were applied to all site activities," Mr. Merschoff said.

Performance in the maintenance area has improved, with the overall material condition of the plant considered to be very good. The skill of individual craft workers continued to be noteworthy.

Performance in engineering also improved and was rated "good" due in part to strong involvement of system and design engineers in maintaining system performance, improvements in engineering information systems, and thorough self-assessments. "While initiatives were undertaken to sustain these performance improvements, inconsistency in the quality of support provided to operations and maintenance remains a challenge," Mr. Merschoff cautioned.

In the plant support area, the radiation protection program was well managed and effective, as was the emergency preparedness area. Security continued to perform at a high level and improvement was noted in fire protection.