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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**NRC RATES GINNA PLANT PERFORMANCE AS "GOOD" IN LATEST ASSESSMENT;
AREA OF PLANT SUPPORT DECLINES FROM "SUPERIOR" DURING PERIOD**

The R.E. Ginna nuclear power plant has received ratings of "good" in all four categories reviewed in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest assessment of the facility's performance. One area of performance, plant support, saw a decline in rating from "superior" during the last evaluation period.

Ginna is located in Ontario, N.Y., and operated by the Rochester Gas & Electric Corporation.

Covered by the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance, or SALP, report is the period from August 25, 1996, to February 21, 1998.

NRC staff and RG&E officials will discuss the assessment during a meeting scheduled for 10 a.m. on Wednesday, April 22, at the Ginna Training Center. The session will be open to the public for observation. Afterwards, NRC staff will be available to speak with reporters, state and local officials, and members of the public.

Four functional areas of nuclear power plant performance are rated in NRC SALP reports: plant operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support. Ratings of Category 1 ("superior"), Category 2 ("good") and Category 3 ("acceptable") are assigned. The reports are issued roughly once every 18 months for each plant.

While Ginna retained "good" ratings in three areas -- plant operations, maintenance and engineering -- since its last assessment in 1996, its rating for plant support declined from "superior" to "good" during the latest period.

From an overall perspective, Ginna's performance was found to be good, with improvements in a number of areas.

"Conservative decision making was evident this period," NRC Region 1 Administrator Hubert J. Miller wrote in a letter to the utility regarding the report. "This performance was exemplified by the main transformer outage in November 1996, during which the station made progress in identifying and repairing equipment problems, some of which were longstanding. The outage was followed by an extended period of stable plant operation, good plant equipment performance and improved interfaces between plant organizations."

NRC staff found that in the area of operations, plant operators' response to problems, as well as the control of startups and shutdowns, continued to be good. Management involvement and oversight were normally evident and were reflected in sustained safe and stable operations. However, there were some lapses in operators' control of work and plant configuration, including the inadvertent draining of reactor makeup water to the waste holdup tank and the inadvertent opening of a reactor coolant system power-operated relief valve.

Concerning maintenance, improvements were made to address past weaknesses in processes. For example, the development and launch of an integrated work schedule improved the overall quality and timeliness of maintenance work and yielded improvements in communication and coordination among operations, maintenance and engineering organizations.

In the category of engineering, work was found to be generally well controlled, as evidenced by good products and support of troubleshooting efforts. Nevertheless, performance in some areas was mixed, such as the completion of the motor-operated valve program and some unresolved service water items that continued to pose a challenge.

Lastly, the area of plant support exhibited weaknesses in radiological boundary controls early in the period, though improvements were made through training and management oversight. Also, security performance declined, with weaknesses noted in the fitness-for-duty program and implementation of the Vehicle Barrier System.

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SALP reports are available on the NRC's Internet web site (<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>) and by e-mail subscription. To receive SALP reports by e-mail as they are issued, send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with the following message: subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname.