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NRC GIVES SIEMENS GOOD SAFETY RATING IN LATEST PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has rated overall safety performance as "good" at Siemens Power Corporation, a nuclear fuel manufacturing plant in Richland, Washington, in the agency's latest performance review.

Officials of the NRC and Siemens will meet to discuss the performance review on Wednesday, June 10, at 8:15 a.m. The meeting will be held in the emergency operations center at Siemens Power Corporation, and is open for public observation. NRC officials will be available to answer questions after the meeting concludes.

The performance review covered the period January 31, 1996, through January 1 of this year. The company was rated in five major areas -- safety operations, safeguards, radiological controls, facility support, and licensing activities.

Ellis W. Merschoff, regional administrator for NRC Region IV, said in a letter to Siemens, "Overall, our review indicates that Siemens has continued to exhibit a good level of performance with attention to safety."

Performance reviews of nuclear fuel facilities do not assign numerical scores to rate performance in the various areas examined as is done for commercial nuclear power plants. Items that need improvement and challenges to performance are identified, and the results are used to determine how much inspection effort will be devoted to the plant in the future.

Program strengths were noted in the areas of criticality safety analyses, radiological controls and facility support. Areas identified as needing improvement included the packaging and shipping of nuclear fuel, the depth and exploration of issues during the incident investigation process, and individuals' performance and accountability in carrying out established procedures and programs.

Based on this review, the NRC has decided to increase its inspection effort in packaging and shipping of nuclear fuel, and will reduce the level of inspection in the area of safeguards if current levels of performance continue. Inspection in safety operations, radiological controls and facility support will also be reduced.

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Note: A copy of the full report is available on the NRC's internet web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/reports>.