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NRC PLANS PERFORMANCE REVIEW MEETING AT  
ABB COMBUSTION ENGINEERING FUEL PLANT IN HEMATITE, MISSOURI

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with officials of the ABB Combustion Engineering, Inc., commercial nuclear fuel facility in Hematite, Missouri, on Wednesday, April 14, to discuss the plant's regulatory performance.

The meeting will be at 1 p.m. at the company's Hematite Nuclear Manufacturing Facility, Building 110, 3300 State Road P. It is open for public observation. NRC officials will be available at its conclusion to answer questions from the news media and other interested observers.

NRC officials will discuss a Licensee Performance Review in which the agency evaluated performance in five areas -- safety operations, safeguards, radiological controls, facility support, and licensing activities -- in order to form a basis for establishing the NRC's inspection program at the facility for the next year.

The assessment covers the period from January 1, 1996, through January 31 of this year.

The NRC review concludes that the facility's performance in radiological controls was "very good" and the remaining four areas -- safety operations, safeguards, facility support, and licensing activities -- were evaluated as "generally adequate."

NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach, in a letter to the company, noted that performance "was inconsistent throughout the assessment period in nuclear criticality, chemical and fire safety, and material control and accounting." Therefore, he added, continued improvements are needed in these major areas to enhance overall performance.

Mr. Beach continued: "Our previous licensee performance review identified your self-assessment program as an area needing improvement. During this review period, your self-assessment program, internal and external audits, and subsequent corrective

actions continued to lack the breadth and depth necessary to enhance overall facility performance."

But he also told the company: "Procedural quality has improved and now provides a generally adequate level of guidance and detail. Current enhancements to the maintenance area, and the newly established maintenance management team, responsible for developing an effective preventive maintenance program, demonstrate a commitment to improve the maintenance of plant equipment. Our review indicated an improvement in material condition, radiation protection, housekeeping, and procedural compliance at your facility since the last review period."

Based on the review, the NRC has decided to increase inspection efforts in the areas of safety operations and also focus on the company's corrective action program for all the major areas. Additionally, the NRC will decrease its radiological controls inspection efforts.

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