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**D.C. COOK NUCLEAR PLANT RATED "GOOD" IN OPERATIONS,
MAINTENANCE, AND PLANT SUPPORT, "ACCEPTABLE" IN
ENGINEERING IN LATEST NRC REVIEW**

In its latest review of the D. C. Cook Nuclear Power Station, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff notes that overall performance there has declined, particularly in the engineering area. The two-unit Cook facility, operated by American Electric Power Co., is near Bridgman, Michigan.

The report, called the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP), rates the facility as "good" in plant operations, maintenance, and plant support and "acceptable" in engineering. The ratings in engineering and plant support represent declines from the previous assessment period.

The NRC staff will discuss the review with American Electric Power officials in a meeting at 1 p.m. on April 3 in the D. C. Cook Energy Center. The Energy Center is at the Cook plant on Red Arrow Highway north of Bridgman. The meeting is 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 on D. C. Cook gives the plant a "Category 2" rating -- indicating good performance -- in operations, maintenance, and plant support and a "Category 3" rating -- indicating acceptable performance -- in engineering.

The report covers the period May 26, 1996, through January 31 of this year.

The previous SALP report rated the D. C. Cook facility as Category 2 -- "good" -- in plant operations, maintenance, and engineering and Category 1 -- "superior" - in plant support.

In notifying the utility of the SALP findings, NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach said, "Overall, I view that your performance has declined from the previous assessment period. This decline is further reflected in the number and scope of NRC inspection findings since the end of this assessment period."

He noted, "The conduct of plant operations improved due to increased management attention which resulted in the identification and resolution of concerns

with control room decorum and communications. In addition, improvements were noted in procedure adherence and human performance."

"In the area of maintenance, work activities were generally accomplished in a quality manner and improvements were noted in procedural quality," he said.

"Performance in the area of engineering declined during the assessment period, primarily due to plant personnel who, at times, failed to recognize when the plant design and licensing bases were being changed," Beach continued. "Also, engineering errors were identified in design changes and licensing basis reviews."

Beach attributed the decline in the performance of the plant support area to "recent problems identified in the area of radiation protection involving poor radiation worker practices and with security force performance problems stemming from personnel staff reductions which adversely affected the training program." He observed, however, that performance in emergency preparedness was strong.

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