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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 13, 1997

WOLF CREEK RATED 'GOOD' IN THREE AREAS
ACCEPTABLE IN FOURTH IN NRC ASSESSMENT REPORT

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

The SALP report was sent Thursday, May 8 to Wolf Creek Nuclear Operating Corporation, which operates the plant. The report evaluates the plant's performance from October 8, 1995, through April 5 of this year.

NRC and Wolf Creek officials will discuss the report during a meeting set for 9 a.m. Thursday, May 22, 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

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Previous</u>
Plant Operations	2	1
Maintenance	2	2
Engineering	3	2
Plant Support	2	1

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In his cover letter to the report, NRC Regional Administrator Ellis W. Merschoff said, "Overall, this represents a significant decline in performance at Wolf Creek."

"In the Operations area, performance during routine and normal operations continued to be characterized by generally good safety focus; however, there were numerous instances of minor procedural violations and inattention to detail. Performance during nonroutine operations was not as well focused. Mr. Merschoff noted the January 1996 event in which the plant's service water system was challenged by the formation of frazil ice. During the event operators did not recognize the condition and their actions complicated the overall plant response.

Performance in Engineering declined but was acceptable. "Specifically, we noted design related deficiencies and inconsistent support of the operations and maintenance functions," Mr. Merschoff said. Inconsistent quality of engineering assessments contributed to occasions when the plant was not operated in accordance with its technical specifications. It was also noted that corrective actions developed in response to identified problems were not thorough and, therefore, did not completely resolve the associated issues.

"In the Plant Support area, the security and housekeeping functions continued to demonstrate a high level of performance. A slight decline was noted, however, in the radiological controls function," Mr. Merschoff said. Radiological protection technicians and radiation workers committed errors which led to the decline. Emergency preparedness suffered from continued problems in determining and communicating emergency action information.

Performance in maintenance remained good. The craft skills of plant workers were very good. However, maintenance of the auxiliary feedwater system challenged the staff throughout the assessment period.

Mr. Merschoff pointed out that one area of weakness affected all functional areas. "Throughout the assessment period, there were problems with developing and implementing in-depth and effective corrective actions to identified problems. Many of the problems identified in the previous SALP continued to hamper operations at the site," he said.

Because Engineering was rated Category 3, Wolf Creek has been requested to discuss at the meeting their view of performance and the actions that have been planned to improve, and provide a written improvement plan within 30 days.