

UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION II
101 Marietta St., Suite 2900, Atlanta, GA 30323
Tel. 404-331-5503 or 7878

No: II-97-31

Contacts: Ken Clark (404) 331-5503
Roger Hannah (404) 331-7878

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Monday, April 7, 1997)

HATCH NUCLEAR PLANT RATED "SUPERIOR" IN TWO AREAS,
"GOOD" IN TWO OTHER AREAS OF NRC ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Hatch nuclear power plant received performance ratings of "superior" in two areas and "good" in two areas of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) of the facility.

The SALP report was sent April 4 to Southern Nuclear Operating Company, which operates the facility near Baxley, Georgia. It evaluates the plant's performance from May 28, 1995 through February 22 of 1997.

NRC and Southern officials will discuss the report during a meeting set for 10:00 a.m. (EDT) Tuesday, April 22, at the Hatch site. The meeting will be open for public observation. NRC officials will be available after the meeting to speak with reporters, state and local officials, and members of the public.

The NRC SALP process rates 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 adequate.

The report on Hatch gives the plant a Category 1 rating in plant operations and engineering indicating "superior" performance, and a Category 2 rating in maintenance and plant support, indicating "good" performance. The ratings were the same in the plant's previous SALP report, issued in July 1995, with the exception of the plant operations area, which improved from a Category 2 rating to a Category 1.

In his cover letter to the report, NRC Regional Administrator Luis Reyes said that in operations "performance was characterized by conservative plant management decisions, and strong operator knowledge and ability..." He said, however that "procedure adherence, especially by non-licensed operators, is an area that needs your continued attention."

In the maintenance area, Reyes wrote that maintenance was well planned and controlled, but that automatic shutdowns of the plant caused by equipment problems, personnel errors, missed tests and foreign material getting into systems kept the plant from getting a higher rating.

Reyes said superior engineering performance continued with strong management involvement and oversight, a well-qualified staff and high quality licensing submittals.

In the plant support area, Reyes noted strong performance in security, but said "contamination control continued to be a challenge." He also said that "although self-assessments and critiques were good, followup corrective actions were not always effective."

###

EDITORS: A copy of the full SALP report is available from this office. SALP reports are also 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.