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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC ISSUES PERFORMANCE REVIEW FOR SEABROOK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff, in its latest plant performance review, has found that safety performance at the Seabrook nuclear power plant remains acceptable. Seabrook, located in Seabrook, N.H., is operated by North Atlantic Energy Services Corp.

In a letter to the company outlining the results of the review, Clifford Anderson, chief of the NRC Region I Division of Reactor Projects branch responsible for inspecting Seabrook, said the plant's management demonstrated a "safe and conservative approach to plant operations" during the evaluation period of April 1998 through Jan. 15, 1999. Several performance improvements were implemented at the plant, including an engineering "Fix-It-Now" team, and there was improved management oversight of the facility's material condition, he said. However, Anderson noted that resolving some degraded equipment concerns remain a challenge, along with human errors during outage operations.

Anderson said routine plant operations were performed well, as were most maintenance and surveillance activities. Performance in the area of engineering improved since the plant's last assessment, while the radiation protection, security and emergency preparedness programs were effective.

Based on this performance, the NRC staff will conduct normal inspections during the next evaluation period, with supplemental inspections planned for the following areas: maintenance - an assessment of corrective actions for degraded equipment in the maintenance backlog; plant support -- an Operational Safeguards Response Evaluation (OSRE) and an assessment of major modifications to the security system.

The text of the plant performance review letter is available from the NRC Region I Office of Public Affairs and on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/ppr>.

NRC reviews safety performance twice a year at every licensed nuclear power plant in the nation. These reviews give the agency staff an integrated assessment of plant performance and provide a basis for planning inspection activities.

Plant performance reviews are being used by the NRC as an interim measure to monitor nuclear power plant safety. The agency began using it for this purpose after suspending the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) process until a new assessment program is developed. Previously, SALP reports were issued every 12 to 24 months.

The new reactor oversight and assessment program being developed will provide quarterly performance reports, based on a number of performance indicators and on inspection findings. This program will be tested at eight sites beginning in June and will be extended to all plants next January. A full description of the new program is available on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/primer.htm>.

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