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I-99-34

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April 13, 1999  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## NRC ISSUES LATEST ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AT FITZPATRICK

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has found that safety performance remains acceptable at the James A. FitzPatrick nuclear power plant, in Scriba, N.Y. The plant is operated by the New York Power Authority (NYPA).

In a letter to NYPA outlining the results of the NRC's plant performance review, NRC Region I official Richard V. Crlenjak said: "Overall, performance at FitzPatrick was acceptable, but declined somewhat during this assessment period, as reflected by increased plant challenges caused by equipment problems and lapses in operator performance during some events and infrequent evolutions."

Crlenjak also said routine operations were generally conducted well. He noted that the fall 1998 outage was "generally successful with respect to refueling and modification activities and in addressing material condition problems. Thus operational performance improved following the outage." He said work processes, maintenance activities and engineering support for the plant were effective overall, but continued management attention is needed to address challenges in these areas.

FitzPatrick is a voluntary pilot plant for the NRC's new assessment process, which is still under development and will affect inspections beginning in June. Prior to that, NRC will carry out the normal inspection program and has scheduled two additional inspections at the initiative of the Region I office. An Operational Safety Team Inspection is planned for next month. The second initiative inspection will focus on external occupational exposure controls.

The text of the plant performance review (PPR) 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.

PPRs are an interim measure the NRC is utilizing to monitor nuclear power plant safety. The agency began using it for this purpose after suspending the Systematic Assessment of License Performance (SALP) process until a new oversight and 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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