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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC RATES INDIAN POINT 3 AS "SUPERIOR" IN ONE PERFORMANCE AREA,
"GOOD" IN TWO OTHERS AND "ACCEPTABLE" IN FOURTH IN REPORT

The Indian Point 3 nuclear power plant has received performance ratings of "superior" for plant support, "good" for maintenance and operations, and "acceptable" for engineering in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff's latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) report for the facility. The plant is located in Buchanan, New York, and is operated by the New York Power Authority.

The assessment covers the period from March 2, 1996, through May 17 of this year.

NRC staff and New York Power Authority officials will discuss the evaluation during a meeting set for 10 a.m. on Friday, July 18, at the Indian Point 3 site.

The meeting will be open to public observation. NRC officials will be available afterwards to speak with reporters, state and local officials, and members of the public.

NRC SALP reports rate nuclear power plant performance in four functional areas: plant operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support. Ratings of Category 1 ("superior"), 2 ("good") or 3 ("acceptable") are assigned. The reports are issued roughly once every 18 months for each plant, though they are typically issued more frequently for plants on the NRC's "watch" list of troubled plants. Indian Point 3 was recently removed from the list.

In the areas of maintenance and plant support, the plant continued to be rated Category 2 and Category 1, respectively. Performance in the operations area improved to Category 2. While engineering continued to be rated as Category 3, improvement was noted late in the SALP period. Overall, the NRC found, management involvement in plant activities -- coupled with improved oversight by onsite and offsite safety review committees -- was effective in improving plant performance and material condition.

"Performance in operations was measurably better this SALP period than last," NRC Region 1 Administration Hubert J. Miller wrote in a letter to the utility. "Improvements were noted regarding operator procedure adherence and communications. Operator performance also improved as indicated by their more frequent use of a questioning attitude and in formality and conduct of control room activities."

Mr. Miller continued, "Some deficiencies in work control led to a number of plant configuration problems, but the steps taken to address these work controls resulted in improvement as demonstrated by good control of plant evolutions and field activities during two outages this year. Continued management attention to maintaining configuration control is needed, particularly as it relates to non-licensed operator activities."

The plant maintenance staff was well trained and field activities were performed well. Despite improvement in work control and planning, additional attention is needed in this area, the NRC told the utility.

Performance in the plant support area remained excellent, with radiological controls, security, emergency preparedness and fire protection programs effectively backing up safe plant operation.

However, the engineering organization was found to be reactive for most of the period. "Steps taken during the period by management to strengthen the system engineering and operations support functions, to better prioritize the backlog and to provide additional resources began to show positive results," Mr. Miller wrote. "Continued management efforts are needed to sustain these improvement efforts."

SALP reports may be viewed on the NRC's internet web site at <<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>>. The reports for all plants may be obtained by e-mail, as issued. Send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with no subject and the following message: subscribe SALP yourfirstname yourlastname.

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