



**UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION II
SAM NUNN ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
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March 3, 2004

Southern Nuclear Operating Company, Inc.
ATTN: J. Gasser, Jr., Vice President
Vogtle Electric Generating Plant
P. O. Box 1295
Birmingham, AL 35201-1295

**SUBJECT: ANNUAL ASSESSMENT LETTER - VOGTLE ELECTRIC GENERATING PLANT
REPORT 05000424/2004001 AND 05000425/2004001**

Dear Mr. Gasser:

On February 3, 2004, the NRC staff completed its end-of-cycle plant performance assessment of the Vogtle Electric Generating Plant. The end-of-cycle review for Vogtle involved the participation of all technical divisions in evaluating performance indicators (PIs) for the most recent quarter and inspection results for the period from January 1 through December 31, 2003. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of our assessment of your safety performance during this period and our plans for future inspections at your facility so that you will have an opportunity to prepare for these inspections and to inform us of any planned inspections that may conflict with your plant activities.

Overall, Vogtle operated in a manner that preserved public health and safety and fully met all cornerstone objectives. Plant performance for the most recent quarter, as well as for the first three quarters of the assessment cycle, was within the Licensee Response Column of the NRC's Action Matrix, based on all inspection findings being classified as having very low safety significance (Green) and all PIs indicating performance at a level requiring no additional NRC oversight (Green). Therefore, we plan to conduct only reactor oversight process (ROP) baseline inspections at your facility through September 30, 2005. We also plan on conducting several non-ROP inspections which include the reactor pressure vessel head and upper and lower head penetration nozzles, reactor containment sump blockage, and spent fuel material control and accounting.

On October 16, 2003, you submitted a request to combine the emergency operating facilities (EOFs) for Farley, Hatch, and Vogtle in to one EOF in Birmingham, Alabama. As part of the review for that request, we made arrangements for a demonstration of the centralized EOF's capabilities on July 14, 2004. This demonstration will include supporting exercises at Plant Farley and Plant Hatch. These exercises are not being evaluated as part of the ROP but will be used to determine approval of the request to combine the EOFs.

The enclosed inspection plan details the inspections scheduled through September 30, 2005. The inspection plan is provided to minimize the resource impact on your staff and to allow for scheduling conflicts and personnel availability to be resolved in advance of inspector arrival onsite. Routine resident inspections are not listed due to their ongoing and continuous nature.

The inspections in the last twelve months of the inspection plan are tentative and may be revised at the mid-cycle review meeting.

As you are aware, the NRC has issued several Orders and threat advisories to enhance security capabilities and improve guard force readiness since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. We have conducted inspections to review your implementation of these requirements and have monitored your actions in response to changing threat conditions. For calendar year 2004, we plan to continue inspections of Order implementation combined with newly developed portions of the security baseline inspection program.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter and its enclosure will be made available electronically for public inspection in the NRC Public Document Room or from the Publicly Available Records (PARS) component of NRC's document system (ADAMS). ADAMS is accessible from the NRC Web site at <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/adams.html> (the Public Electronic Reading Room).

If circumstances arise which cause us to change this inspection plan, we will contact you to discuss the change as soon as possible. Please contact me at 404-562-4540 with any questions you may have regarding this letter or the inspection plan.

Sincerely,

/RA/

Brian R. Bonser, Chief
Reactor Projects Branch 2
Division of Reactor Projects

Docket Nos.: 50-424, 50-425
License Nos.: NPF-68, NPF-81

Enclosure: Plant Vogtle Inspection/Activity Plan

cc w/encl: (See page 3)

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cc w/encl:

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