



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC ISSUES ANNUAL ASSESSMENT LETTERS FOR NATION'S NUCLEAR PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued annual assessment letters to the nation's operating commercial nuclear power reactors. As of Dec. 31, 2011, 99 of 104 nuclear reactors were performing at a high level.

"We ensure nuclear power plants are safe, continually inspecting them and assessing their performance on a regular basis, as part of our mission to protect people and the environment," said Eric Leeds, director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

There are five levels of plant performance based on a detailed assessment of performance indicators (e.g., safety system availability and reliability, control of radiation exposure and unplanned shutdowns) and inspection findings. Levels range from "fully meeting all safety cornerstone objectives" to "unacceptable performance".

All nuclear plants are inspected daily by the NRC. If a plant's performance declines, the NRC increases the level of inspection and oversight to ensure the plant operator is taking the steps necessary to correct the situation. The additional amount of inspection is commensurate with the level of plant performance.

Eighty-eight nuclear reactors fully met all safety performance objectives and were inspected by NRC using the normal detailed level inspection program.

Eleven nuclear reactors were assessed as needing to resolve one or two items of low safety significance. For this performance level, regulatory oversight includes additional inspection and attention to follow up on corrective actions. These plants were: Brunswick 1 and 2 (N.C.); Byron 2 (Ill.); Cooper (Neb.); Crystal River 3 (Fla.); Limerick 2 (Pa.); Millstone 2 (Conn.); Pilgrim (Mass.); Prairie Island 1 (Minn.); Sequoyah 1 (Tenn.); and Waterford (La.). (Byron 2 and Cooper have resolved their issues since the reporting period ended and have transitioned to the baseline inspection level.)

Three nuclear reactors were at a degraded level of performance. For this performance level, regulatory oversight includes more NRC inspections, senior management attention and

oversight focused on the cause of the degraded performance. These plants were: Palisades (Mich.); Perry 1 (Ohio); and Susquehanna 1 (Pa.).

One reactor, Browns Ferry 1 in Alabama, require increased oversight due to a safety finding of high significance, which will include additional inspections to confirm the plant's performance issues are being addressed.

Fort Calhoun plant in Nebraska is in an extended shutdown with significant performance issues and is currently under a special NRC oversight program distinct from the normal performance levels. Therefore the plant will not receive an annual assessment letter.

Later this spring and summer, the NRC will host a public meeting or other event in the vicinity of each plant to discuss the details of the annual assessment results. A separate announcement will be issued for each public assessment meeting. In addition to the annual assessment letters, plants also receive an NRC inspection plan for the coming year.

Note that the NRC routinely provides changes to information on plant performance and posts the latest information as it becomes available to the NRC website.

Each plant receives either a mid-cycle review letter or an annual assessment letter every six months, along with an NRC inspection plan. The next mid-cycle assessment letters will be issued in September 2012.

More information is available on the NRC website for:

- [The Reactor Oversight Process](#);
- [The annual assessment letters to each nuclear power plant](#); and
- The [most current information](#) on nuclear power plant performance.
- [Fort Calhoun oversight](#).

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NOTE: Anyone wishing to take photos or use a camera to record any portion of a NRC meeting should contact the Office of Public Affairs beforehand.

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