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NRC Approves Probation For Georgia's Agreement State Regulatory Program

The Commission has approved placing the state of Georgia on probation for deficiencies in its Agreement State program—the first time the NRC has taken such action. This move does not affect oversight of nuclear reactors in Georgia, which remain under NRC authority, or state responsibilities related to emergency preparedness at reactor sites.

Georgia is one of 37 states that have entered into agreements with the NRC giving them authority to license and regulate certain nuclear materials users within their borders. The agency reviews these Agreement State programs regularly. Probation is an option for ensuring continued protection of public health and safety in cases where program weaknesses exist. The weaknesses identified in Georgia do not immediately threaten public health and safety.

The managers of Georgia's program are addressing the performance concerns. The program submitted an [improvement plan](#) that has been reviewed and approved by NRC staff. The NRC will remain closely involved with the state program managers as they implement improvements.

A review team comprised of technical staff from the NRC, North Carolina and Florida evaluated the Georgia program in October 2012. The team identified significant deficiencies throughout the program that, if left uncorrected, have the potential to impact public health and safety. The team observed a basic misunderstanding of several important safety and security requirements, and it noted significant communication issues between staff and management that affected the program's safety culture and performance. Overall, the team identified a decline in performance since Georgia's last evaluation in 2008.

The problems identified relate largely to prioritization of work, specifically responding to incidents promptly and prioritizing inspections of licensees using radioactive materials with the greatest potential for harm. The team found numerous examples where tasks were not appropriately prioritized.

The review found Georgia's program to be compatible with the NRC regulatory program and "adequate but needs improvement." The team recommended, and an NRC management review board agreed, that Georgia's performance be found unsatisfactory for several performance indicators. The team made 11 specific recommendations to Georgia for improving performance. The report on Georgia's agreement state program can be found [here](#).

Pending the Commission's decision, the state has been on "Heightened Oversight," a condition requiring increased interaction with NRC staff, preparation of a program improvement plan, bimonthly conference calls and periodic status reports. The NRC will continue to interact more frequently with the state program office during probation. The Georgia program will be evaluated again in January 2014.