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NRC ESTABLISHES INDEPENDENT SAFETY ASSESSMENT
TEAM TO EVALUATE MAINE YANKEE PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission today established an Independent Safety Assessment (ISA) team to take a comprehensive look at the Maine Yankee nuclear power plant's performance in connection with its operating license.

Concerns have been raised about Maine Yankee's analyses and the NRC's review of a computer code used in calculating the safety of the plant in the event of a small break, loss-of-coolant accident. The NRC's Inspector General (IG) on May 8 issued a report that identified deficiencies in the staff's handling of some past licensing and regulatory matters at Maine Yankee. The NRC's Office of Investigations has a separate investigation of the licensee.

The ISA team is a follow on to the IG investigation and is responsive to a request from Chairman Shirley Ann Jackson, who also requested the NRC staff to assess its own policies and practices in light of the IG's findings. The ISA team, which will report to the Chairman with a Commission-approved charter, is also responsive to concerns raised by the Governor of Maine.

The team will take a broader look at the licensing basis and operational safety performance of Maine Yankee. All told, the team is expected to complete its evaluation and submit a report to the Chairman in about 16 weeks.

The ISA team will be headed by Edward L. Jordan, the NRC's Director of the Office for Analysis and Evaluation of Operational Data. AEOD was formed in 1979 to conduct independent safety evaluations of power reactor operational data.

Mr. Jordan is directed to develop a detailed charter, team composition and work plan by June 9. The team will include expert contract support from the national laboratories and independent consultants. In addition to specialists from the NRC, there will also be representatives from the State of Maine.

By order of the NRC, Maine Yankee currently is restricted to 90 percent of its approved power level of 2700 Mwt. The plant is ten miles north of Bath, Maine.