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Contact: David McIntyre, 301-415-8200

NRC Issues Mid-Cycle Assessments For Nation's Nuclear Plants

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued mid-cycle assessment letters to the nation's 99 operating commercial nuclear power plants regarding their performance through the first half of 2016. The mid-cycle assessment period concluded on June 30, with 96 plants in the two highest performance categories.

“These assessment letters are part of our annual assessment process, involving a thorough review of plant performance, assessing any changes needed and communicating those results,” said Chris Miller, director of the Division of Inspection and Regional Support in the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. “They are part of the Reactor Oversight Process the NRC uses to ensure our nation's nuclear generation facilities are safe.”

Of the 96 highest-performing reactors, 87 fully met all safety and security performance objectives and were inspected by the NRC using the normal “baseline” inspection program. Nine reactors needed to resolve one or two items of low safety significance. For this performance level, regulatory oversight includes additional inspection and follow-up of corrective actions. Plants in this level are: Davis-Besse (Ohio); Indian Point 3 (New York); Oyster Creek (New Jersey); Prairie Island 2 (Minnesota); River Bend (Louisiana); Salem (New Jersey); Sequoyah 1 (Tennessee); and Vogtle 1 and 2 (Georgia).

There were no reactors in the third performance category with a degraded level of performance. For this category, regulatory oversight includes more NRC inspections, senior management attention and oversight focused on the cause(s) of the degraded performance.

Three reactors, Arkansas Nuclear One 1 and 2 (Arkansas), and Pilgrim (Massachusetts), were in the fourth performance category at the end of the mid-cycle assessment period and require increased oversight. Arkansas Nuclear One 1 and 2 were in this category because of two safety findings of substantial significance. Pilgrim was in this category because of long-standing performance issues of low-to-moderate safety significance.

The NRC routinely updates information on each plant's current performance and posts the latest information as it becomes available to the [action matrix summary](#). The annual assessment letters sent to each operating reactor are also available through the NRC's webpage on the [Reactor Oversight Process](#). Annual construction oversight assessments for new reactors at the [Vogtle, Summer](#) and [Watts Bar](#) sites are also on the NRC website.

As part of the agency's Project Aim initiative to become more efficient and effective, the Commission approved the staff's recommendation to discontinue the mid-cycle assessments after this assessment period. The staff has determined this will not adversely impact the NRC's mission, principles or values. In place of mid-cycle assessments, the staff will use ongoing routine assessment activities for site-specific oversight, including continuous assessment activities and the continued use of the annual assessments.