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July 24, 1996

Mr. B. Ralph Sylvia  
Executive Vice President  
and Chief Nuclear Officer  
Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation  
Generation Business Group D-2  
300 Erie Boulevard West  
Syracuse, NY 13202

SUBJECT: SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT OF LICENSEE PERFORMANCE REPORT NOS.  
50-220/96-99 AND 50-410/96-99 FOR NINE MILE POINT NUCLEAR STATION,  
UNITS 1 AND 2

Dear Mr. Sylvia:

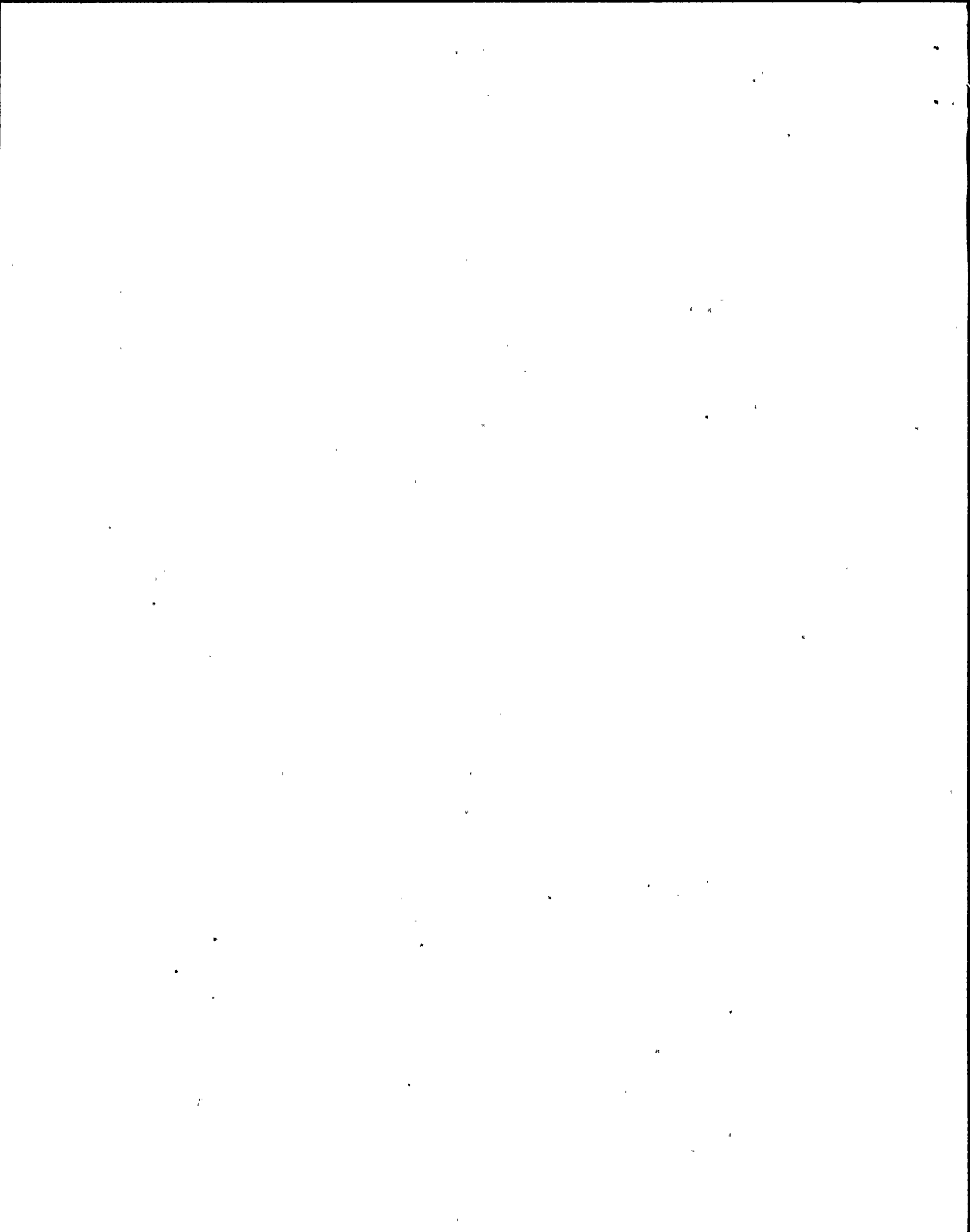
This letter forwards the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) report for Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station, Units 1 and 2, for the period January 29, 1995, through June 1, 1996 (Enclosure 1). This assessment was conducted using the SALP process that was implemented by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) on July 19, 1993. In this process, the NRC staff evaluates the performance of licensees in four functional areas: operations, engineering, maintenance, and plant support. The plant support area is composed of radiological and effluent controls, chemistry, security, emergency preparedness, fire protection, and housekeeping.

Overall, the NRC staff continued to observe good performance at Nine Mile Point. Management oversight and involvement in all functional areas were evident and effective. All areas exhibited instances of high levels of performance during the assessment period, with superior performance again obtained in the operations area during the latter part of the assessment period. Although the deviation/event report (DER) program was successful in that staff throughout the site identified problems, the program was less successful in the areas of analysis, evaluation, tracking, and corrective action determination. These weaknesses allowed longstanding problems to go uncorrected, for instance, the problem with the design of the blowout panels for the Unit 1 reactor and turbine buildings. In addition, issues of procedural adequacy, inattention to detail, and equipment problems continued to hamper efforts to maintain a consistently high level of performance.

The NRC SALP Board again rated the operations area as Category 1. Operations management provided effective oversight of activities. Operations personnel demonstrated a clear safety perspective and a questioning attitude. Response to events was appropriate and well controlled. Operations personnel generally performed well and exhibited superior performance in the latter part of the SALP period. The decline in operator performance that was noted early in the

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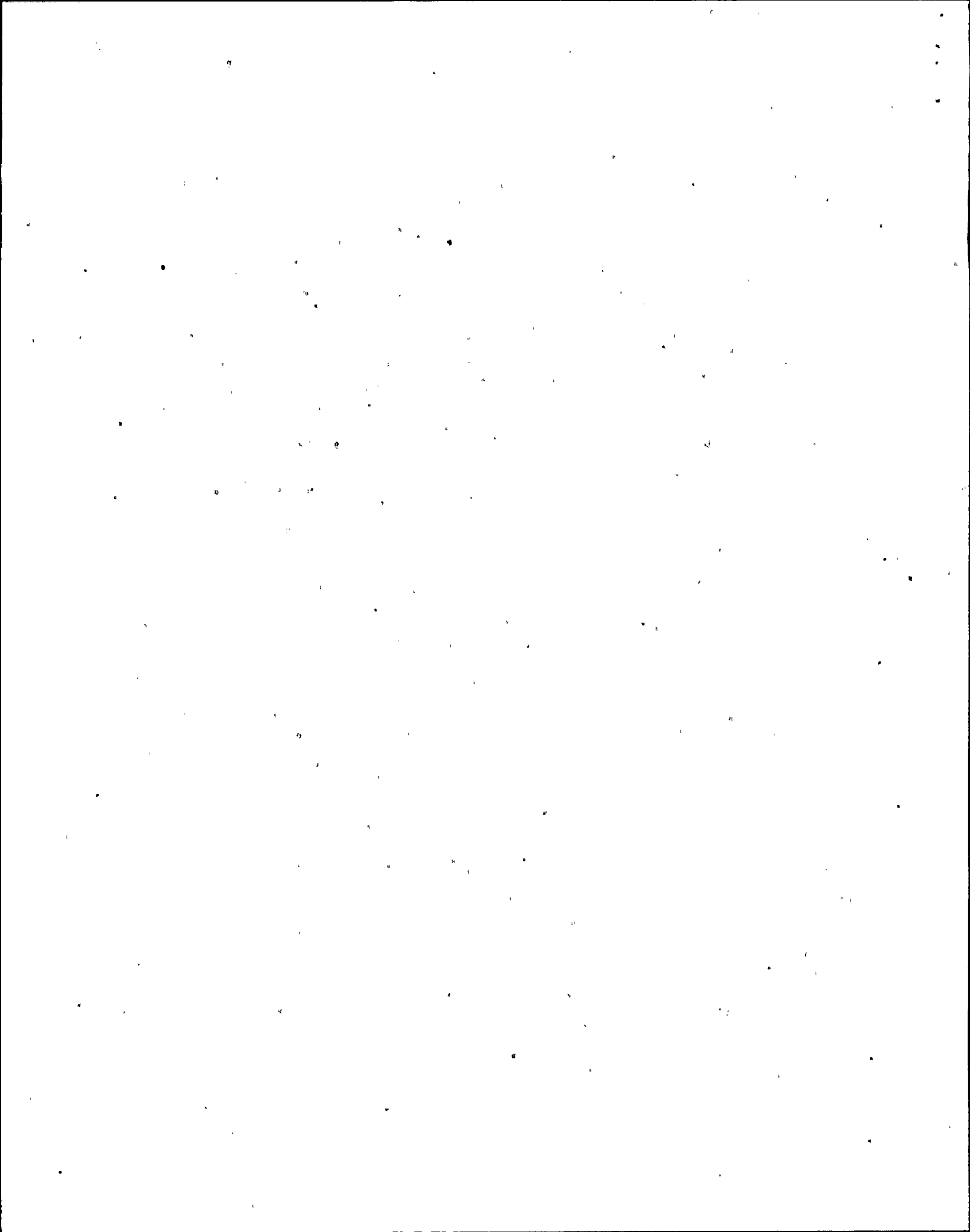
period reflected a weakness in the organization determining the underlying causes of personnel performance errors. In addition, sporadic problems with procedure adequacy unnecessarily challenged the operators during routine evolutions.

The NRC SALP Board again rated the maintenance area as Category 2. Maintenance management was generally involved in day-to-day maintenance work and also directed a particularly noteworthy level of attention to maintenance activities during outages to ensure good performance. The NRC staff observed that a strong focus on maintaining safety system readiness at both units was evident in the reduced corrective maintenance backlog. Personnel performance in this area improved as compared with the previous period, but some performance problems continued to arise. The licensee effectively used the corrective action process to identify problems, but tracking and followup of corrective actions were weak in ensuring corrective action effectiveness. Revised programs and procedures resulted in an overall improvement in performing maintenance at the end of the SALP period. The licensee's efforts to properly maintain the material condition of the plants were generally effective; however, the NRC staff continued to observe deficiencies.

The NRC SALP Board again rated the engineering area as Category 2. Engineering performance with respect to both units was good. Engineering management provided appropriate oversight of activities and implemented effective actions to reduce the backlog of engineering work activities. In general, the quality of engineering design and analysis activities was good, but the NRC staff noted several instances of weak or untimely performance. Performance of engineering programs varied; for example, the emergency diesel generator operational trending program was effectively implemented, but the implementation of the motor-operated valve program was weak. The DER program was effectively used to document problems, but the results of the program were not trended well or consistently shared between units. Engineering personnel were technically knowledgeable and system engineers effectively monitored their assigned systems.

The NRC SALP Board again rated the plant support area as Category 2. Good performance continued in the radiological protection program. Programs to maintain radiological exposures as low as is reasonably achievable (ALARA) were effective. The radiological effluents, environmental monitoring, and chemistry programs remained strong. Security program performance was good, although the NRC staff noted some instances of inattention to detail. The emergency preparedness program was well established and maintained. The NRC staff noted recurring problems with event classification during most of the period, but the licensee showed improvement during the latest exercise. Fire protection and housekeeping were generally very good.

We have scheduled a management meeting with you to present our assessment. The meeting will be held at 2:30 p.m. on August 8, 1996, at the Joint Media Center and will be open for public observation. At the meeting, you and your staff should be prepared to discuss our assessment and any initiatives you plan to take to address the weaknesses identified in our assessment.



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Enclosure 2 is the schedule of the NRC inspections of your facility that are planned through the next SALP assessment period. We will inform you of any changes. The routine inspection effort by the resident inspectors is not included in this schedule.

We appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Original Signed By: William F. Kane

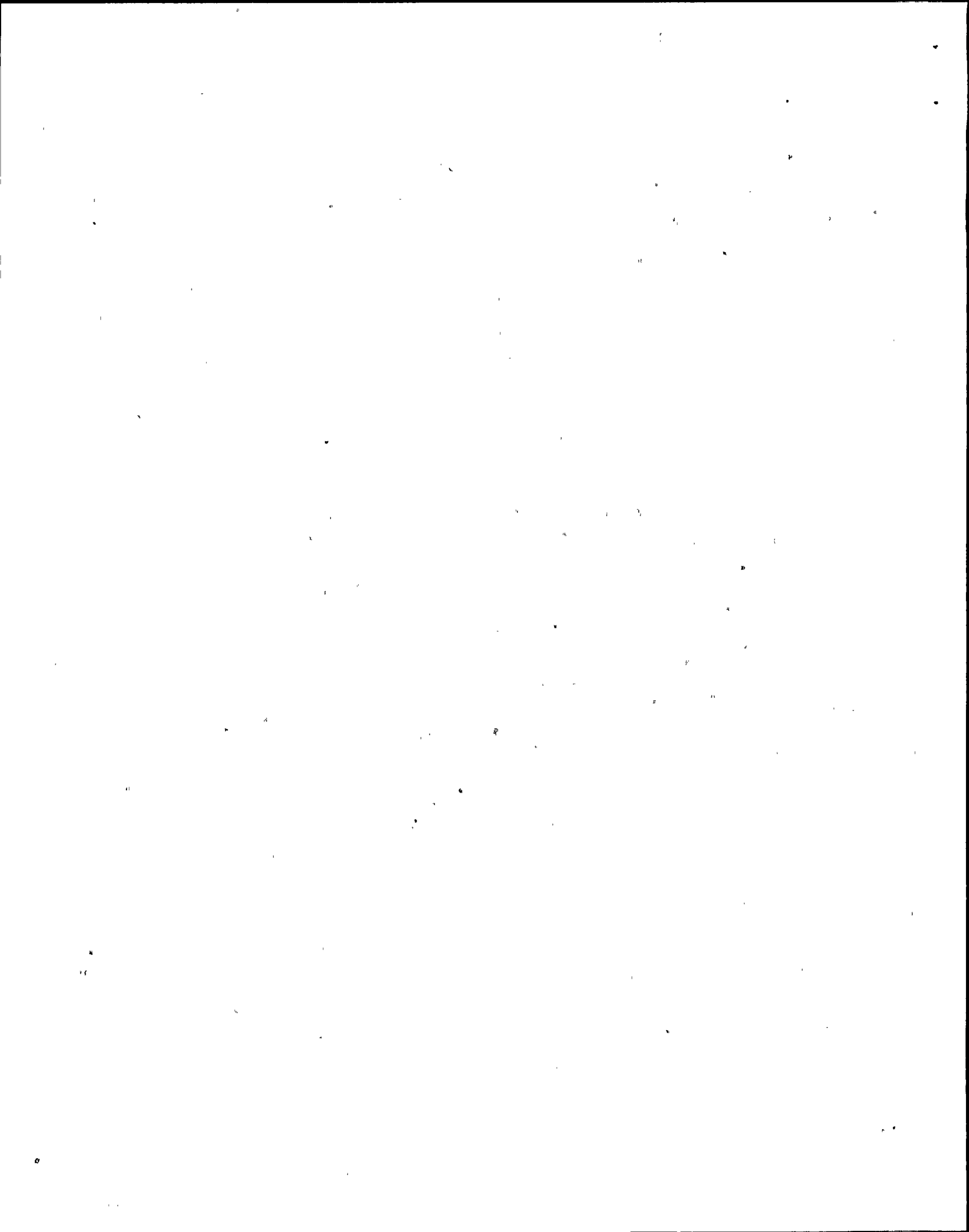
Thomas T. Martin  
Regional Administrator  
Region I

Docket Nos. 50-220  
50-410

Enclosures: 1. SALP Report Nos. 50-220/96-99 and 50-410/96-99  
2. Inspection Plan for Nine Mile Point Units 1 and 2

cc w/encls:

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C. Terry, Vice President-Nuclear Engineering  
M. McCormick, Vice President - Safety Assessment and Support  
N. Rademacher, Unit 1 Plant Manager  
J. Conway, Unit 2 Plant Manager  
D. Wolniak, Manager, Licensing  
J. Warden, New York Consumer Protection Branch  
G. Wilson, Senior Attorney  
M. Wetterhahn, Winston and Strawn  
Director, Electric Division, Department of Public Service, State of  
New York  
J. Rettberg, New York State Electric and Gas Corporation  
C. Donaldson, Esquire, Assistant Attorney General, New York Department of Law  
J. Vinquist, MATS, Inc.  
P. Eddy, Power Division, Department of Public Service, State of New York  
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Institute of Nuclear Power Operations (INPO)



Mr. B. Ralph Sylvia

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