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NRC STAFF RATES INDIAN POINT 3 NUCLEAR POWER PLANT
"SUPERIOR" IN PLANT SUPPORT; "GOOD" IN MAINTENANCE;
AND "ADEQUATE" IN ENGINEERING AND PLANT OPERATIONS

The staff of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission has rated New York Power Authority's (NYPA) Indian Point 3 nuclear power plant in Buchanan, N.Y., "superior" in plant support; "good" in maintenance; and "adequate" in engineering and plant operations in its latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) report.

SALP reports assess licensee performance in four functional areas - plant operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support - and assign ratings of Category 1 (superior performance), Category 2 (good performance) and Category 3 (adequate performance). The Indian Point 3 SALP evaluated performance from August 16, 1992 through March 2, 1996. However, the evaluations are based largely on the licensee's performance since April 1995, in preparation for restart.

Indian Point 3 remained in an extended plant shutdown from March 1993 until May 1995 to address concerns about the plant's performance by both NRC and NYPA. The utility agreed to the shutdown, which NRC confirmed in writing. Because the SALP program does not account for a licensee's performance being less than adequate, the assessment report was deferred to allow for sufficient performance improvement to support plant restart and proper operation. The last SALP evaluation was performed in 1992.

The NRC staff will meet with NYPA officials at 1:30 p.m. on May 15 at the Indian Point site to discuss the SALP report. The meeting will be open to public observation.

In a letter to NYPA officials NRC Region I Administrator Thomas T. Martin said:

"Management exhibited a strong presence and effective involvement during special plant evolutions and during the conduct of major maintenance activities. The addition of special evolution managers during the June 1995 plant restart, to provide senior management support and oversight on-shift, was considered a strength."

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"Management generally took a conservative approach to plant operations. The quality assurance (QA) organization's ability to identify problems and adverse trends and to propose appropriate corrective actions was likewise considered a strength. Your plans for performing departmental self-assessments are noteworthy, but the program has yet to mature sufficiently to evaluate its effectiveness."

On operations, Mr. Martin said:

"While operators were well poised to restart the plant in June 1995, plant events in the latter half of 1995 and weaknesses in the material condition of the plant significantly challenged the operators. On some occasions, operators did not perform in a manner consistent with management expectations, particularly with regard to procedure adherence. Furthermore, operators did not always show a healthy questioning attitude, such as challenging instrumentation and control technicians regarding whether plant conditions were appropriate for the conduct of testing and sometimes demonstrated a weak understanding of the plant's licensing and design basis."

"The prolonged forced outage, beginning in September 1995 and ongoing at the close of the SALP period, forced the operations organization in particular, and the plant organization in general, to react to emerging problems and delayed their focus on planned long-term performance improvements. As a result, performance declined following the restart assessment team inspection in April 1995. While significant corrective actions and management attention were devoted to improving operator performance late in the SALP period, evidence of sustained performance improvement remains to be demonstrated."

On maintenance, Mr. Martin said:

"Activities were generally well coordinated and the overall quality of the work performed was good. Maintenance management and staff generally responded well to emergent equipment issues and displayed conservative decision-making in addressing many of these issues. Procedure improvements were evident as was increased procedure adherence and a questioning attitude on the part of maintenance workers. Surveillance activities were generally conducted well and in accordance with procedures. However, occasional lapses in the questioning attitude of test personnel and in supervisory oversight caused several inadvertent and unexpected impacts on plant systems that resulted in challenges to the operators. Plant material condition declined since restart as evidenced by the growing maintenance backlog and the increased frequency and number of equipment failures, particularly in the balance of plant."

On engineering, Mr. Martin said:

"Performance was adequate overall during the assessment period. For issues that received specifically-focused site or engineering management attention, performance was good."

"For other issues, performance varied significantly, with some noteworthy examples of poor work. Operability determinations, technical specification interpretations and the resolution of material condition problems were generally good."

"However, emergent work activities severely hampered the engineering organizations' ability to focus and address longer term issues that affect equipment reliability and organizational performance. Technical quality of work varied significantly. System engineering responded well to emerging issues, particularly equipment failures, but they and their management did not provide for those trending and other monitoring activities that are necessary to reduce the occurrence rate of significant equipment failures."

And regarding plant support, Mr. Martin said:

"Performance in the area of radiation protection and controls continues to be very good. In the security area, performance improved to the point where it was also strong. Further, NYPA maintained an effective emergency preparedness program. Significant efforts were expended in the fire protection area to make the area ready to support restart. Those efforts were generally good. Housekeeping performance was mixed, with some evidence that suggested that management expectations in that area either were not fully developed, or not clearly articulated."

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