United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road King of Prussia, PA 19401
Phone: 610/337-5330 Fax: 610/337-5241
Internet: dps@nrc.gov or nas@nrc.gov

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Contact: Diane Screnci FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Neil A. Sheehan

NRC RATING OF INDIAN POINT 2 NUCLEAR POWER PLANT FINDS DECLINE IN OVERALL PERFORMANCE OF FACILITY

The Indian Point 2 nuclear power plant received performance ratings of "good" in the areas of plant operations, maintenance and plant support and "acceptable" in the area of engineering in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance, or SALP, of the facility.

The SALP report was sent yesterday to Consolidated Edison Company of New York, which operates the plant in Buchanan, N.Y. It evaluates the plant's performance from September 17, 1995, through February 15, 1997.

NRC staff will meet with Consolidated Edison officials at the facility at 1 p.m. on April 8 to discuss the report. The session will be open for public observation.

SALP reports rate licensee performance in four functional areas -- plant operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support -- and assign ratings of Category 1 (superior), 2 (good) or 3 (acceptable). The assessments are issued approximately once every 18 months. Indian Point 2 had received ratings of "superior" in the areas of maintenance and engineering and "good" in the areas of plant operations and plant support in its previous SALP.

In a letter to Consolidated Edison, NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller said Indian Point 2's overall performance declined during the latest SALP period.

"Many plant equipment problems were experienced due to the poor condition of a number of systems," Mr. Miller wrote. "The unit experienced nine trips and shutdowns, as well as several power reductions as a result of equipment problems. Management was involved in many plant activities and made conservative operational decisions, but management oversight was at times ineffective regarding overall efforts to identify, evaluate and correct problems. Particular weaknesses were evident in evaluation of the causes and extent of problems, and repeat failures of plant equipment occurred. These weaknesses were reflected in the handling of the Auxiliary Feedwater System flow control and steam admission valve test failures and the turbine casing grit intrusion event, which led to the failure of three of the four Main Feedwater Regulating Valves. Problems with the AFW equipment are of particular concern, because this system is the most risk-significant system in the plant."

Mr. Miller continued, "Once resolutions to problems had been developed, the implementation of corrective actions was slow

in a number of cases. Line organization self-assessments did improve and became more self-critical late in the period, particularly in the operations and maintenance areas. However, the quality assurance organization had limited impact in enhancing plant performance and the safety review committees were not effectively involved in highlighting key problem areas of facility performance."

Performance in the areas of operations and plant support was generally effective, with some elements of those efforts very good, the administrator wrote. "Operators performed well during planned evolutions and unplanned transients. Decision-making regarding plant operations was conservative," he said. "However, there was some degree of informality in the conduct of operations activities. Radiological controls and other plant support programs continued to be implemented effectively."

In the area of maintenance, there was a decline in performance, Mr. Miller said. "Routine maintenance activities were usually conducted well, but in one case an error in routine electrical breaker work caused a plant trip. Most emergent work was handled well. However, thorough and aggressive actions were not taken to analyze and address an adverse trend in overall equipment performance and to correct deficient equipment conditions, including those identified through surveillance test anomalies and failures."

Mr. Miller noted that engineering performance declined "substantially," elaborating that the quality of engineering efforts was "good for modification work but often poor in day-to-day support to operations. Several instances demonstrated failures of the engineering staff to aggressively address existing problems and to provide in-depth evaluations of identified problems. Also, surveillance test results were sometimes inadequately evaluated; the AFW steam supply valve is a notable example. This contributed to acceptance of less-than-desirable equipment conditions in the plant. Efforts to understand and maintain the design and licensing bases were also not fully effective."

At the April 8 meeting, Consolidated Edison officials will be asked to discuss their plans to address weaknesses identified in the evaluation.

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SALP reports are available on the NRC's Internet web site (http://www.nrc.gov/OPA) and by e-mail subscription. To receive SALP reports by e-mail as they are issued, send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with the following message: subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname.