

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region II
61 Forsyth Street, Suite 23T85
Atlanta, GA 30303

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Contact: Ken Clark or Roger Hannah
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NRC STAFF ISSUES ASSESSMENT OF REGULATORY PERFORMANCE
AT VOGTLE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT NEAR AUGUSTA

Level Of Safety Performance Superior In All Functional Areas Assessed

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a new Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) report for Southern Nuclear Operating Company's Vogtle commercial nuclear power plant which assesses the level of safety performance at the facility as Category 1, which is considered superior.

NRC officials said performance at the two-unit Vogtle plant was assessed for a period from January 28, 1996 through August 2, 1997.

In a letter to the company dated September 15, the NRC's Region II Administrator in Atlanta, Luis A. Reyes, said Vogtle's high level of performance during the assessment period was due to "the strong focus and teamwork" of plant employees and the fact that "senior managers set high standards of safety performance" while being actively involved in site activities and making conservative decisions related to facility operations.

Reyes also informed Vogtle officials that, because of the superior level of safety performance, the next SALP evaluation period will be extended from the normal 18 months to 24 months and that the plant will receive an appropriate level of reduced NRC inspection, reflective of its superior performance.

The NRC has three resident inspectors stationed at Vogtle who will continue to monitor the plant's performance of regulatory safety requirements.

The NRC staff assesses performance in four areas at each licensed commercial nuclear power plant in the United States on a periodic basis. Those areas are Plant Operations, Maintenance, Engineering and Plant Support. Ratings fall into three categories with Category 1 considered superior while Category 2 is considered good and Category 3 is considered acceptable.

In its previous assessment, which ran from July 3, 1994 through January 27, 1996, Vogtle was rated Category 1, or superior, in each category except Plant Support which was Category 2. The current assessment rated Vogtle's regulatory safety performance as Category 1, superior, across the board.

NRC officials will discuss details of the current SALP report with company officials during a public meeting at Vogtle at **10:30 a.m. on September 24.**

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EDITORS: A copy of the full SALP report is available from this office. SALP reports are also available on the NRC's Internet web site (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.