

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
Region III Office of Public Affairs  
801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, IL 60532-4351

NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT III-98-25

April 14, 1998

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NRC STAFF NOTES "STEADY IMPROVEMENT" IN PERFORMANCE  
AT PERRY NUCLEAR PLANT IN LATEST ASSESSMENT

In its latest review of the Perry Nuclear Power Station, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff notes that overall performance there has improved, with ratings of "good" in three areas and "superior" in a fourth. The plant near Perry, Ohio, is operated by Centerior Service Company.

The report, called the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP), rates the facility as "good" in plant operations, maintenance, and engineering, and "superior" in plant support.

The NRC staff will discuss the review with Centerior Service Co. officials in a meeting at 10 a.m. on April 21 in the Perry High School auditorium, Perry, Ohio. The meeting is open to public observation. NRC officials will be available at the conclusion of the meeting for questions and comments from members of the public and the news media.

NRC SALP reports evaluate utilities in four functional areas -- plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support -- and assign ratings of Category 1, 2, or 3 depending on whether their performance in those areas is superior, good or acceptable. The report on Perry gives the plant a "Category 2" rating -- indicating good performance -- in operations, maintenance, and engineering, and a "Category 1" rating -- indicating superior performance -- in plant support.

The report covers the period September 15, 1996, through February 28 of this year.

The previous SALP report rated the Perry facility as Category 2 - "good" - in all four assessment areas: Plant operations, maintenance, and engineering, and plant support.

**In notifying the utility of the SALP findings, NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach said, "Overall, I view that your performance has improved during this assessment period. The actions you have taken to identify and resolve performance weaknesses have contributed to the steady improvement at Perry. I encourage you to continue with these efforts so that further improvement is realized."**

He noted that communications between reactor operators had improved and that planned activities, like the reactor shutdown for refueling and subsequent startup, were conducted very well. He added, however, that the "communications of management expectations was not always clear."

In the maintenance area, Beach said, "Plant material condition was significantly improved and corrective and preventive maintenance item backlogs were reduced." He noted, though, that occasional human performance errors had occurred during maintenance activities.

"Performance in the area of engineering improved during the period, especially in the quality of design change packages," Beach continued. Problems, however, were found with maintaining the plant's design documents and with older design calculations.

In the area of plant support, he pointed out that radiation protection performance was "very good," security performance was "effective," and emergency preparedness performance was "strong."

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