



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC ISSUES ANNUAL ASSESSMENT LETTERS FOR NATION'S NUCLEAR PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued annual assessment letters to the nation's 104 operating commercial nuclear power reactors. As of December 31, 2010, 98 of 104 nuclear reactors were in the two highest performance categories.

"We ensure nuclear power plants are safe, continually inspecting them and rating their performance on a regular basis, as part of our mission to protect people and the environment," said Eric Leeds, director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

There are five levels of plant performance based on a detailed assessment of performance indicators (e.g., safety system availability and reliability, control of radiation exposure and unplanned shutdowns) and inspection findings. Levels range from "fully meeting all safety cornerstone objectives" (highest level) to "unacceptable performance" (lowest level).

All nuclear plants are inspected daily by the NRC. If a plant's performance declines, the NRC increases the level of inspection and oversight to ensure the plant operator is taking the steps necessary to correct the situation. The additional amount of inspection is commensurate with the level of plant performance. Additional information on the Reactor Oversight Process is available at: <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1649/r4/>.

Eighty-nine nuclear reactors performed at the highest level and were inspected by NRC using the normal detailed level inspection program.

Nine nuclear reactors performed at the next highest level, needing to resolve one or two items of low safety significance. For this performance level, regulatory oversight includes additional inspection and attention to follow up on corrective actions. These plants were: Brunswick 1 and 2 (N.C.); Calvert Cliffs 2 (Md.); Farley 1 (Ala.); Ginna (N.Y.); North Anna 2 (Va.); Susquehanna 1 (Pa.); Turkey Point 3 and 4 (Fla.)

Six nuclear reactors were at the third level of performance with one degraded safety cornerstone. For this performance level, regulatory oversight includes more NRC inspections, senior management attention and oversight focused on the cause of the degraded performance. These plants were: Oconee 1, 2, 3 (S.C.); Fort Calhoun (Neb.); H. B. Robinson 2 (S.C.); and Wolf Creek 1 (Kan.)

Later this spring and summer, the NRC will host a public meeting or other event in the vicinity of each plant to discuss the details of the annual assessment results. A separate announcement will be issued for each plant meeting. In addition to the annual assessment letters, plants also receive an NRC inspection plan for the coming year.

Note that since the end of 2010, the NRC routinely provides changes to information on plant performance and posts the latest information as it becomes available to the NRC website at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/actionmatrix_summary.html.

Each plant receives either a mid-cycle review letter or an annual assessment letter every six months, along with an NRC inspection plan. The next mid-cycle assessment letters will be issued in September 2011. The annual assessment letters sent to each licensee are available on the NRC website at: <http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/listofasmrpt.html>.

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