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**NRC REQUIRES INFORMATION FROM NUCLEAR POWER PLANT LICENSEES
ABOUT 'YEAR 2000' READINESS OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has notified all utilities operating nuclear power plants that they are required to inform NRC of steps they are taking to see that computer systems will function properly by the year 2000.

Within 90 days, licensees must confirm to NRC in writing, under oath or affirmation, they have a program under way to deal with the "Year 2000" computer problem. They are also required to notify NRC no later than July 1, 1999, as to whether their facility is "Year 2000" ready in order to comply with NRC requirements. If facilities are not ready, licensees must provide a status report of work remaining to be done.

The "Year 2000" problem refers to computers' potential inability to recognize 21st Century dates beginning with January 1, 2000, and beyond. It is caused by computer programs that use two-digit numbers to represent a calendar year (such as "98" for 1998). If the problem is not corrected, vulnerable computer systems will read "00" as 1900, rather than 2000, possibly causing some systems or equipment to malfunction.

NRC continues to have no information thus far indicating that such a problem exists with nuclear power plant safety-related systems. But problems have been found in non-safety, but nevertheless important, computer-based systems. Those which might be affected include security computers, emergency response, control room displays, radiation monitors, engineering programs, inventory control and plant simulators.

In preparing this notification to licensees (known as a generic letter), the NRC staff took into consideration comments received after the letter was published in draft form in January.

The text of the letter will be posted on the NRC Internet web page at http://www.nrc.gov/NRC/NEWS/year2000html. Other related documents posted at this location include NRC advisories to the nuclear industry issued in December 1996 and August 1997, a summary of a meeting between NRC staff and the Nuclear Energy

Institute last October, and links to additional Year 2000 resources at NRC and other Federal agencies.