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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC ISSUES PERFORMANCE REVIEW FOR SUSQUEHANNA NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff, in its latest performance review for the Susquehanna nuclear power plant, has found safety performance at the Berwick, Pa., facility to be acceptable. The twin-reactor plant is operated by Pennsylvania Power & Light (PP&L) Co.

In a letter to the company outlining the results of the review, NRC Region I official, A. Randolph Blough, wrote that Susquehanna's senior management increased their involvement in plant activities during the evaluation period of April 1998 through January 15, 1999. He said there were some noted improvements in the operations and maintenance areas, "Operators typically demonstrated competent performance during normal operations, plant transients [unplanned power reductions] and planned evolutions [changes to power levels]." In the maintenance area, there was some improvement in work control planning and scheduling processes in response to previously identified problems.

Mr. Blough said that improving coordination and communication between work groups is a continuing challenge. In addition, performance in identifying and correcting problems was deficient on a number of important issues.

"Emergency core cooling systems were maintained in a highly reliable state." However, Mr. Blough said that early in the evaluation period, there were a number of plant shutdowns and unplanned power reductions primarily caused by other equipment failures. Continued management attention is needed in the maintenance and engineering areas to address equipment issues.

In addition to the normal inspection program, the NRC staff plans supplemental inspections for the following areas: maintenance -- an assessment of the new work control process, the predictive maintenance program and the Maintenance Rule program implementation; engineering -- an assessment of engineering involvement in the work control and corrective action programs; and plant support -- an assessment of major upgrades being made to security equipment and, as part of a national program to evaluate the security at all commercial reactor sites, an Operational Safeguards Response Evaluation.

The text of the plant performance review letter is available from the NRC Region I Office of Public Affairs and on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/ppr>.

NRC reviews safety performance twice a year at every licensed nuclear power plant in the nation. These reviews give the agency staff an integrated assessment of plant performance and provide a basis for planning inspection activities.

Plant performance reviews are being used by the NRC as an interim measure to monitor

nuclear power plant safety. The agency began using it for this purpose after suspending the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) process until a new assessment program is developed. Previously, SALP reports were issued every 12 to 24 months.

The new reactor oversight and assessment program being developed will provide quarterly performance reports, based on a number of performance indicators and on inspection findings. This program will be tested at eight sites beginning in June and will be extended to all plants next January. A full description of the new program is available on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/primer.htm>.

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