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**NRC ISSUES LATEST ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AT HOPE CREEK**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has found that safety performance remains acceptable in the NRC's latest plant performance review at the Hope Creek Generating Station in Hancocks Bridge, N.J. The plant is operated by Public Service Electric and Gas (PSE&G) Company.

In a letter to PSE&G outlining results of the review, NRC Region I official Glenn W. Meyer said, "Overall performance at the Hope Creek station was acceptable." He noted that operational results were very good, as was human performance during more infrequently performed activities. Mr. Meyer noted that the on-line maintenance program and effective management of the corrective maintenance backlog contributed to reliable equipment performance. "Engineering activities effectively supported the plant. Processes and procedures were typically of very good quality, and Hope Creek benefitted from the common PSE&G program upgrades stemming from Salem recovery activities," he said.

Hope Creek is a voluntary pilot plant for the NRC's new assessment process. The associated program is still under development and will affect inspections beginning in June. Until then, NRC will carry out the normal inspection program.

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, called plant performance reviews (PPR), give the agency staff an integrated assessment of plant performance and provide a basis for planning inspection activities.

Plant performance reviews are an interim measure NRC is utilizing to monitor nuclear power plant safety. The agency began using it for this purpose after suspending the Systematic Assessment of License Performance (SALP) process until a new oversight and assessment program is developed. Previously, SALP reports had been 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 plants 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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