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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC STAFF RATES FITZPATRICK "GOOD"
IN ALL FOUR AREAS OF LATEST ASSESSMENT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has rated the James A. FitzPatrick nuclear power plant as "good" in all four areas of the latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance (SALP) of the facility. The plant is located in Scriba, N.Y., and is operated by the New York Power Authority (NYPA).

The assessment covers the period from November 19, 1995, through June 28 of this year.

NRC staff and NYPA officials will discuss the evaluation during a meeting scheduled for 10 a.m. on September 4 at the Training Center at the FitzPatrick site. The meeting is open to the public for observation.

Four functional areas of nuclear power plant performance are rated in NRC SALP reports: plant operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support. Ratings of Category 1 ("superior"), 2 ("good"), or 3 ("acceptable") are assigned.

FitzPatrick's latest ratings, "good" in all four categories, are the same as those it received during the previous assessment period.

"Operations management provided generally good oversight of plant activities and demonstrated a conservative approach to operation of the plant. Significant attention was given to reducing operator workarounds and burdens. Operator performance and response to plant transients was generally good. However, personnel errors and problems with the control of plant configuration continued to be a concern," wrote Hubert J. Miller, NRC Region I Administrator, in a letter to NYPA.

On maintenance, Mr. Miller said, "Good performance was achieved as evidenced by the maintenance work request backlog reduction, and generally improved material condition and equipment reliability. However, personnel errors during the

conduct of maintenance and surveillance activities caused several equipment and plant operational problems."

Regarding engineering, Mr. Miller said, "Enhanced efforts by system engineers to monitor system performance and good self-assessment efforts to identify engineering performance improvement opportunities were noted. Engineering efforts were effective in reducing operator workarounds. However, there were instances in which formal configuration controls were bypassed and safety evaluations were not performed as required. While efforts have been made to review and improve retrievability of design basis information, some lapses in tracking related corrective actions occurred.

In the area of plant support, Mr. Miller said emergency preparedness, fire protection and security programs and the occupational radiation protection program were generally effective. However, he said, "Several noteworthy problems occurred involving the failure of radiation workers to adhere to radiological control barriers and procedures, a recurring problem from the previous SALP period. These problems persisted despite initiatives undertaken early in the period to improve radiation worker and radiation protection technician training and performance."

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SALP reports are available on the NRC's internet web site (<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>) and by e-mail subscription. To receive SALP reports by e-mail as they are issued, send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with the following message: subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname.