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CONTACT: David McIntyre, 301-415-8200

NRC Issues Annual Assessments for Nation's Nuclear Plants

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued annual letters to the nation's 100 commercial nuclear power plants operating in 2014 regarding their performance throughout the year. As of the end of December, 94 plants were in the two highest performance categories.

“These assessment letters provide the results of a systematic NRC review of performance indicators and inspection findings at each domestic power reactor facility,” said Bill Dean, director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation. “In addition to ensuring that the nation's nuclear power plants are safe by inspecting them and evaluating their performance regularly, our goal in issuing these letters is to ensure that all of our stakeholders clearly understand the basis for our assessments of plant performance, our future inspection plans, and the actions we are taking to address any notable deficiencies.”

Of the 94 highest-performing reactors, 75 fully met all safety and security performance objectives and were inspected by the NRC using the normal “baseline” inspection program. (This group includes the Vermont Yankee plant, which permanently shut down in late December and is now transitioning to decommissioning status.)

Nineteen reactors were assessed as needing to resolve one or two items of low safety significance. For this performance level, regulatory oversight includes additional inspection and follow-up of corrective actions. Plants in this level are: Calvert Cliffs 2 (Maryland); Clinton (Illinois); Davis-Besse (Ohio); Diablo Canyon 1 and 2 (California); Fermi 2 (Michigan); Fitzpatrick (New York); Limerick 1 and 2 (Pennsylvania); Millstone 3 (Connecticut); Oconee 1 (South Carolina); Oyster Creek (New Jersey); Palisades (Michigan); Point Beach 2 (Wisconsin); River Bend (Louisiana.); Salem 1 (New Jersey); St. Lucie 1 (Florida); Waterford (Louisiana) and Wolf Creek (Kansas).

Fermi, Oyster Creek, and Wolf Creek have resolved their issues since the reporting period ended and have transitioned to the highest performing level.

Three nuclear reactors were in the third performance category with a degraded level of performance. For this category, regulatory oversight includes more NRC inspections, senior management attention and oversight focused on the cause(s) of the degraded performance. These plants were Monticello (Minnesota); Pilgrim (Massachusetts) and Point Beach 1 (Wisconsin). Monticello has resolved some of its issues since the reporting period ended and has transitioned to the second highest performing level.

Two reactors, Arkansas Nuclear One 1 and 2, were in the fourth performance category, requiring increased oversight because of two safety findings of substantial significance. This oversight will include several additional inspections and frequent NRC management involvement to confirm the performance issues are being addressed.

The Fort Calhoun plant in Nebraska is currently under a special NRC oversight program distinct from the normal performance levels because of an extended shutdown associated with significant performance issues. In December 2013, the NRC oversight panel cleared the unit to resume operations, but the plant will remain under special oversight until the panel recommends, and senior NRC management approves, returning it to regular oversight. Therefore, the plant will not receive an annual assessment letter. Further details on NRC's oversight activities at Fort Calhoun are available on the NRC's webpage on [Special NRC Oversight at Fort Calhoun Station](#).

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 public assessment meeting. In addition to the annual assessment letters, plants also receive an NRC inspection plan for the coming year.

The NRC routinely updates information on each plant's current performance and posts the latest information as it becomes available to the [action matrix summary](#). The annual assessment letters sent to each operating reactor are also available through the NRC's webpage on the [Reactor Oversight Process](#). Annual construction oversight assessments for new reactors at the [Vogtle and Summer sites](#) and at [Watts Bar 2](#) are also on the NRC website. The letters are designated "4Q/2014" under "Assessment Reports/Inspection Plans" on each reactor's webpage.

Every six months each plant receives either a mid-cycle or annual assessment letter along with an NRC inspection plan.