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FOR IMMEDIATE

E-mail:

NRC RATES PALO VERDE NUCLEAR PLANT `SUPERIOR' IN THREE AREAS
AND `GOOD' IN ONE OTHER IN ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station has received performance ratings of "superior" in plant operations, engineering and maintenance and "good" in plant support in the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance.

The SALP report was issued on July 5 to the Arizona Public Service Co., which operates the three-reactor site about 50 miles west of Phoenix. It evaluates the plant's performance for the period from Dec. 1, 1994, through June 1.

NRC and APS officials will discuss the report at a meeting at 9 a.m. Wednesday, July 24, at the Energy Information Center at the Palo Verde site. The meeting will be open to the public for observation; NRC officials will be available afterwards for questions.

SALP reports rate nuclear plants in four functional areas -- plant operations, maintenance, engineering and plant support, and assign ratings of Category 1, 2 or 3, reflecting superior, good or adequate performance, respectively.

The NRC rated Palo Verde "superior" in the areas of operations, maintenance and engineering, and "good" in the area of plant support. In the previous SALP report, in December 1994, all four areas were rated as "good."

"The significant improvement reflected in three functional areas is commendable," L. Joe Callan, Regional Administrator of NRC Region IV in Arlington, Texas, said in a letter to APS. "It is clear that Arizona Public Service has established the programs and processes necessary to achieve and sustain superior performance."

"Management attention is evident at all levels, self-

assessments have been fully assimilated throughout the Palo Verde organization and self-criticism has been institutionalized as a path for individual and organizational improvement," Mr. Callan said.

In the operations area, the superior rating reflected improvements in operational performance and leadership. However, the NRC noted that correction of inconsistencies in individual performance is necessary to assure continued superior performance.

In maintenance, safety performance was found to have improved as evidenced by the improved material condition of the plant and a low number of maintenance-related plant challenges. Management attention and skills displayed by craft personnel were noted as strengths.

Engineering demonstrated superior performance, as evidenced in part by support of successful efforts to remove a fuel assembly stuck in the Unit 2 reactor in late March and early April.

In the plant support area, emergency preparedness and fire protection were noted as strengths. However, inconsistencies in radiation protection and security programs detracted from the overall rating.

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EDITORS/NEWS DIRECTORS: A copy of the SALP report is available
upon request from
this office.