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NRC ISSUES PERFORMANCE REVIEW FOR PILGRIM NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff, in its latest review of performance at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant, has found that safety performance at the Pilgrim nuclear power plant remains acceptable. Pilgrim, located in Plymouth, Mass., is operated by Boston Edison Company.

In a letter to the company outlining the results of the review, Clifford Anderson, chief of the NRC Region I Division of Reactor Projects branch responsible for inspecting the plant, said that overall equipment and plant reliability improved during the evaluation period of April 1998 through Jan. 15, 1999. "Improving trends were observed in the maintenance and operations areas where there were no significant human performance related events," he said. In addition, Anderson said, a significant effort to reduce the internal contamination of the residual heat removal system, which is used to help safely shut down the plant, was satisfactorily accomplished during the period

Anderson said the number and significance of operator errors declined and procedure quality and use improved. In the maintenance area, a reduction in the number of human performance problems during maintenance and testing activities was noted. There was evidence of effective management oversight of engineering activities in support of safe plant operation. However, the cumulative effect of an engineering work backlog remains a challenge. Deficiencies were identified in the security and fire protection areas early in the assessment period, but they were promptly corrected.

Based on this performance, the NRC staff will conduct normal inspections during the next evaluation period, with supplemental inspections planned to look at two engineering areas: the backlog of open operability evaluations and resolution of findings by both an NRC architectural/engineering review team and the utility's design bases information program.

The text of the plant performance review (PPR) 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.

PPRs 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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