

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234
Internet: opa@nrc.gov

No. 99-152

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Tuesday, July 20, 1999)

**NRC FINDS 89 NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS IMPLEMENTING Y2K PROGRAMS
CONSISTENT WITH GUIDANCE; 14 PLANTS REQUIRE NRC FOLLOW-UP**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has identified 89 nuclear power plants that have followed Y2K programs and industry guidance that are acceptable to the agency. The NRC will conduct special follow-up reviews of the remaining 14 plants to verify that licensee Y2K readiness activities are consistent with the guidance. None of the follow-up reviews involves safety systems.

These findings are based on NRC's preliminary integrated assessment of Y2K readiness, comparing results of its recent onsite reviews at all 103 nuclear power plants with responses from licensees indicating their status of Y2K readiness as of July 1.

During the April - June 1999 time frame, the NRC conducted Y2K reviews at all operating nuclear power plants. All plants are using the NRC-approved industry guidance. Since some of the site reviews took place early, some Y2K activities at certain plants had not progressed sufficiently for the NRC to conclude that all activities were being implemented in accordance with industry guidance at the time of the on-site review. For example, a plant may not have completed repair or replacement of a plant component or may not have completed some aspect of contingency planning activities at the time of the NRC staff's review. Consequently, the NRC will conduct follow-up onsite reviews by mid-August at 14 plants, ten of which reported Y2K readiness of all systems by July 1.

The 14 nuclear power plants (units) scheduled for such a follow-up review are:

Arkansas Units 1 and 2 (Russellville, AR)*
Beaver Valley Units 1 and 2 (Shippingport, PA)
Cooper (Brownville, NE)*
Grand Gulf (Port Gibson, MS)*
Indian Point Unit 2 (Buchanan, NY)*
Prairie Island Units 1 and 2 (Red Wing, MN)*
River Bend (St. Francisville, LA)*
Summer (Jenkinsville, SC)*
Three Mile Island Unit 1 (Middletown, PA)
Vermont Yankee (Vernon, VT)
Waterford (Taft, LA)*

*Plants reporting Y2K ready as of July 1

In their July 1 reports to NRC, all 103 operating nuclear power plants reported no Y2K problems which could directly affect the performance of safety systems. Sixty-eight reported all their computer systems and digital embedded components that support plant operations were Y2K ready. The remaining 35 plants reported plans for additional work on a few non-safety

computer systems or devices to be fully Y2K ready, and provided their schedules to complete the work. None of these items are part of the safety systems designed to shut down a reactor or to keep it in a safe condition. The NRC will verify completion of the remaining activities for all 35 plants as they are completed.

The "Year 2000" or Y2K problem refers to computers' potential inability to recognize dates beginning with January 1, 2000, and beyond. It arises from computer programs that use two-digit numbers to represent a calendar year (such as "98" for 1998). For example, computer systems could read "00" as 1900, rather than 2000, potentially causing computer systems to malfunction. "Y2K ready" means that functions provided by computer systems will be carried out successfully with the coming of the Year 2000.

Additional information on the preliminary integrated assessment can be found on NRC's Y2K web site at www.nrc.gov/NRC/NEWS/year2000.html. A final report incorporating results of the follow-up reviews is expected to be issued at the end of August.

#