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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC STAFF ISSUES LATEST ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE AT GINNA

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has found that safety performance remains acceptable in the NRC's latest plant performance review at the Ginna Nuclear Power Plant near Rochester, N.Y. The plant is operated by Rochester Gas & Electric Company (RG&E).

The review assesses performance at Ginna from April 1998 through January 1999.

In a letter to RG&E summarizing the results, NRC Region I official G. Scott Barber said, Ginna "has had an excellent operational run," operating at near full rated power for 421 days.

Mr. Barber said the plant was operated with a "safety-conscious and conservative approach to the execution of plant activities to minimize operational and personnel risk." Mr. Barber also said plant material condition was good and operators responded well to the few equipment problems that did occur.

He said engineering performance improved and plant modifications were "generally well developed and implemented." Followup evaluations (root cause evaluations) were not thorough in a few cases of events involving interdepartmental communications issues. Plant support activities, such as radiological controls, security and emergency planning were effective.

In addition to the normal inspection program, an operational safeguards response evaluation will also be conducted. This inspection is part of a national program to assess security at all commercial reactor sites.

The text of the plant performance review 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, called plant performance reviews (PPRs), give the agency staff an integrated assessment of plant performance and provide a basis for planning inspection activities.

Plant performance reviews are an interim measure NRC is utilizing to monitor nuclear power plant safety. The agency began using it for this purpose after suspending the Systematic Assessment of License Performance (SALP) process until a new oversight and 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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