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NRC TO DISCUSS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF INDIAN POINT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of Entergy Nuclear Northeast on Tuesday, April 27, to discuss the results of the agency's annual assessment of safety performance at the Indian Point 2 and 3 nuclear power plants. Entergy operates the plants, which are located in Buchanan, N.Y.

The meeting, which will be open to the public for observation, is scheduled from 7 to 10 p.m. at Crystal Bay on the Hudson, 5 John Walsh Boulevard, Peekskill, N.Y. Before the session is adjourned, NRC staff will be available to answer questions from the public on the plants' safety performance, as well as the role of the NRC in ensuring safe operation of the facility.

The performance period to be discussed is January 1 to December 31, 2003. In addition, NRC staff will provide a brief overview of how the agency's Reactor Oversight Process works. The NRC also plans to discuss aspects of the agency's licensing and oversight of dry cask storage systems and independent spent fuel storage installations. A separate meeting on this topic will be scheduled in the future.

A letter sent from the NRC Region I Office to plant officials addresses the performance of the plant during the period and will serve as the basis for the meeting discussion. It is available on the NRC web site at:

www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/LETTERS/inpt_2003q4.pdf.

Overall, Indian Point 2 and 3 operated safely during the period. Performance at the plants continues to slowly improve. Nevertheless, some weaknesses still exist in the implementation of corrective action programs at the plants.

The NRC uses a color-coded system to assess the significance of problems at nuclear power plants, with "green" at the low end of the spectrum, then increasing to "white," "yellow" or "red." During the first half of 2003, Indian Point 2 still had a "yellow" inspection finding

associated with requalification examination failures by licensed reactor operators. However, the NRC staff closed out that finding in May 2003 after concluding the issue had been appropriately addressed by Entergy. A “white” inspection finding related to a degraded control room fire barrier remained open during the second half of 2003 at Indian Point 2. After the issue was reviewed by NRC staff inspections in June and December 2003, the agency concluded in January of this year that sufficient progress had been made to close out that finding.

In addition, the NRC has closed out a substantive cross-cutting issue in the area of human performance at Indian Point 2 after finding that sufficient improvements have been made. Another substantive cross-cutting issue at Indian Point 2, in the area of problem identification and resolution, remains open, with the NRC continuing to assess progress toward improvements.

With regard to Indian Point 3, a Performance Indicator turned “white” in June after exceeding a threshold for the number of unplanned scrams, or shutdowns, per 7,000 hours of operation. A supplemental inspection to review the root cause of and corrective actions for the number of unplanned shutdowns was satisfactorily completed in November 2003. The Performance Indicator remained “white” through March 2004 and subsequently returned to “green” based on the absence of additional unplanned shutdowns.

On the topic of security issues, the NRC has issued several orders and threat advisories to enhance security capabilities and improve guard force readiness since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. The agency has also conducted inspections to review the implementation of these requirements and has monitored the action of plant operators in response to changing threat conditions. The NRC will continue security inspections during 2004.

Current performance information for Indian Point 2 is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/IP2/ip2_chart.html.

Current performance information for Indian Point 3 is available on the NRC web site at: www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/IP3/ip3_chart.html.

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