



NRC NEWS

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

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NRC ISSUES MID-CYCLE ASSESSMENTS FOR NATION'S NUCLEAR PLANTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued mid-cycle assessment letters to the nation's 104 operating commercial nuclear power plants. The agency's most recent assessments show that all plants continue to operate safely.

"We ensure nuclear power plants are safe, inspecting them and rating their performance regularly, as part of our mission to protect people and the environment," said Cynthia Pederson, acting deputy director for reactor safety programs in the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation.

The mid-cycle assessment period concluded on June 30, with 97 of the 104 plants in the two highest performance categories. There are five levels of plant performance based on a detailed assessment of inspection findings and performance indicators (e.g. safety system availability and reliability, control of radiation exposure and unplanned shutdowns). Levels range from "meeting all safety cornerstone objectives" (highest level) to "unacceptable performance" (lowest level).

If a nuclear power plant's performance declines, the NRC increases the level of inspection and oversight to ensure the plant operator is taking the steps necessary to correct the situation. The additional amount of inspection is commensurate with the level of plant performance. Additional information on the Reactor Oversight Process is available at : <http://www.nrc.gov/reading-rm/doc-collections/nuregs/staff/sr1649/r4/>.

The latest round of assessments shows that 85 of the plants were performing at the highest level require normal NRC inspection and oversight. Twelve plants were performing at the next highest level, needing to resolve items of low to moderate safety significance and receive additional NRC inspection and attention to follow up on corrective actions. These plants were: Braidwood Unit 1 (Ill.); Callaway (Mo.); Davis-Besse (Ohio); Dresden Unit 3 (Ill.); Farley Unit 1 (Ala.); North Anna Unit 2 (Va.); Palisades (Mich.); Prairie Island Unit 2 (Minn.); San Onofre Unit 2 (Calif.); Seabrook (N.H.); Turkey Point Unit 3 (Fla.), and Waterford Unit 3 (La.).

Seven plants were performing at the third level of performance with one degraded safety cornerstone, needing even more NRC inspections, senior management attention, and oversight focused on the cause of the degraded performance. These plants were: Browns Ferry Units 1, 2, and 3 (Ala.); Ginna (N.Y.); Hatch Unit 2 (Ga.); Saint Lucie Unit 1(Fla.), and Wolf Creek Unit 1(Kan.).

Every six months each plant receives either a mid-cycle review letter or an annual assessment letter, along with an NRC inspection plan. The next annual assessment letters will be issued in March 2011.

Some plants' ratings may have changed since the last day of the assessment period. A list of each plant's current performance rating is available on the NRC website at: http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/actionmatrix_summary.html. Updated information on plant performance is posted to the NRC website as it becomes available. The mid-cycle assessment letters sent to each licensee are available at: <http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/index.html>.

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