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Contact: Diane Screnci, 610/337-5330
Neil Sheehan, 610/337-5331

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E-mail: opal@nrc.gov

R.E. GINNA NUCLEAR PLANT TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL NRC OVERSIGHT

The R.E. Ginna nuclear power plant will receive additional oversight from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission as a result of a change in one of the indicators used by the agency to assess plant performance. The indicator is in the area of emergency response organization drill participation.

When considering nuclear power plant performance, the NRC utilizes color-coded performance indicators and inspection findings. The colors start with “green” and then increase to “white,” “yellow” or “red,” commensurate with the safety significance of the issues involved. In the case of performance indicators, they are updated on a quarterly basis, with any changes reflected on the NRC’s web site, at www.nrc.gov.

As of the end of the first quarter of 2007, the performance indicator for emergency response organization drill participation changed from “green” to “yellow” for the Ginna plant, which is located in Ontario, N.Y., and operated by Constellation Energy. The indicator measures the percentage of emergency response organization members assigned to fill key positions who have participated in a drill, exercise or actual event during the previous eight quarters. It is designed to ensure that members of the emergency response organization have adequate opportunities to practice their respective assignments and keep current with procedures and the emergency plan in preparation for response to an actual event.

Constellation did not recognize that a group of newly qualified control room communicators – a key emergency response organization position – although qualified during the first quarter of 2007 did not take part in a subsequent drill in the same quarter. This caused the drill participation rate to drop below 60 percent, which in turn has resulted in the performance indicator transitioning from “green” to “yellow.”

The company has reported to the NRC that it has enough control room communicators who are sufficiently trained to meet the minimum staffing requirement for the emergency plan staffing. Therefore, the NRC believes there is no immediate concern with regard to the plant’s ability to properly respond to an emergency at the facility.

With this change, the plant will move from the Licensee Response column of the NRC’s Action Matrix to the Degraded Cornerstone column. The Action Matrix, which is available at

http://www.nrc.gov/NRR/OVERSIGHT/ASSESS/actionmatrix_summary.html, is used by the agency to determine the appropriate level of oversight for plants. The change will result in a corresponding increase in the NRC's inspection and assessment oversight at Ginna. This increased oversight will include a supplemental inspection to provide assurance that the problem has been adequately addressed.

“Our Reactor Oversight Process utilizes performance indicators with clearly established thresholds,” NRC Region I Administrator Samuel J. Collins said. “The program is designed so that when those thresholds are crossed, additional NRC oversight is implemented. That is what is happening in this case.”

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