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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC STAFF ISSUES CONFIRMATORY ACTION LETTER TO MAINE YANKEE,  
SENDS TWO SPECIALISTS TO PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has issued a letter to Maine Yankee Atomic Power Company confirming the company's agreement to complete a number of actions before restarting its Maine Yankee nuclear plant in Wiscasset, Maine.

Maine Yankee officials also have agreed not to restart the plant without the concurrence of NRC Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller.

The confirmatory action letter results from a number of cable separation and safety related logic testing problems found at the plant over the past several weeks. Two specialists, one from NRC headquarters and another from the regional office in King of Prussia, Pa., have been sent to Maine Yankee to assess the extent of the problem. Results of their findings will be published early next year.

Maine Yankee shut down the plant on December 5 after finding that certain cables did not have the proper separation required by the plant's design and licensing basis to protect them during accident conditions. The utility discovered the problem while conducting reviews called for by a generic letter the NRC sent to nuclear power plant licensees earlier this year.

In his letter to the company, Mr. Miller noted that, on two occasions since the plant's shutdown, Maine Yankee's plan for determining the extent of cable separation problems had proved insufficient. The company has since revised its approach to assessing the scope of the problem.

NRC's confirmatory action letter provides that prior to restarting the plant, Maine Yankee will:

1. Complete the initial review of the testing of safety-related logic circuits pursuant to NRC Generic Letter No. 96-01. The company had previously agreed to complete this review by the end of this year, and now will complete the review either prior to restart or by year's end, whichever comes first.
2. Develop a plan and methodology for ensuring that all safety significant cable separation problems are identified and appropriately resolved in accordance with the plant's licensing and design bases.
3. Evaluate the root cause of the problem in a way that will address all hardware deficiencies identified, and use this information to validate the comprehensiveness of corrective actions.
4. Meet with NRC representatives in the Region I office to describe the results and conclusions of its review.

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