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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BEAVER VALLEY NUCLEAR PLANT RATED "GOOD" IN THREE AREAS,
"SUPERIOR" IN FOURTH AREA OF NRC ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Beaver Valley nuclear power plant received performance ratings of "good" in three areas and "superior" in the fourth area of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's latest systematic assessment of licensee performance (SALP) of the facility.

The SALP report was sent November 15 to Duquesne Light Company, which operates the facility near Shippingport, Pennsylvania. It evaluates the plant's performance from June 4, 1995, through September 28 of this year.

NRC systematic assessment reports rate licensees in four functional areas - plant operations, maintenance, engineering, and plant support - and assign ratings of Category 1, 2 or 3 depending on whether performance in those areas was superior, good or adequate. The report on Beaver Valley gives the plant a Category 1 (superior) rating in maintenance, and a Category 2 rating in operations, engineering and plant support, indicating "good" performance.

In a letter to Duquesne Light, NRC Regional Administrator Hubert J. Miller said, "Overall, the NRC observed good safety performance at Beaver Valley Power Station. Senior station management demonstrated a conservative operating philosophy and has taken steps to improve performance standards and expectations. The problem identification and corrective action processes generally have been effective in identifying and correcting material deficiencies and human performance issues."

The administrator had these comments on Beaver Valley's performance in the four rated categories:

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OPERATIONS

Overall performance in operations was good and has improved since the last assessment period. Operator knowledge, skills, and handling of normal plant startup and shutdown evolutions were very good. Operator response to degraded plant conditions and transients was also good. Operators usually displayed a questioning attitude in identifying problems. Some problems in routine control room activities occurred early in the assessment period; however, emphasis on self-checking practices led to improved performance later in the period. Strained senior reactor operator (SRO) staffing levels contributed to some performance problems, such as missed surveillances. NRC will follow closely the effectiveness of current management steps to improve SRO staffing.

MAINTENANCE

Maintenance programs have been effectively implemented with excellent management oversight ensuring reliable operation of plant safety equipment. Improvements were noted in procurement and non-outage backlog management. We will follow your current efforts to improve maintenance planning and work control processes as they are important to further backlog reduction. Some weaknesses were noted in the quality and scheduling of equipment testing, and in vendor oversight.

ENGINEERING

Engineering performance was good. Management attention to engineering activities and improvement initiatives was considered a strength. The quality of technical work and design changes was good; however, some corrective actions for identified deficiencies were not timely. A number of equipment problems impacting plant operations occurred during the period underscoring the importance of directing system engineering focus on plant material condition.

PLANT SUPPORT

The radiological controls program was generally aggressive and properly focused, but was not successful in obtaining consistent worker adherence to controls. Superior performance was exhibited in the effluent controls and environmental monitoring areas. The security program continued to be effective. The EP program maintained excellent offsite rapport with offsite agencies and an excellent training program, but exercises revealed some weaknesses in response and technical assessment.

EDITORS: A copy of the full SALP report is available from this office. ALP reports are also available on the NRC's Internet web site (<http://www.nrc.gov/OPA>) and by e-mail subscription. To receive SALP reports by e-mail as they are issued, send an e-mail to listproc@nrc.gov with the following message: `subscribe salp yourfirstname yourlastname.`