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# NRC May Resume Plant Status Report on Nukes

LCG, Dec. 28, 2001--The Nuclear Regulatory Commission said yesterday that it was considering resuming publication on the Internet of its daily plant status report, but no decision has been reached.

The report, withdrawn for security reasons following the September 11, listed all U.S. commercial reactors, their current output as a percentage of capacity (but not the capacity), dates of outages, dates of expected return to service of idle plants and a very brief explanation of why any plant was not at 100 percent of capacity.

Victor Dricks, an NRC spokesman, said "We're still evaluating. It's a Catch 22. Our concern is a security issue. We're trying to balance that with the public's right to know."

Diverse segments of the public miss the report. Members of the general public living close to reactors followed the plant status report to see how their local nuclear power plant was doing, investors and financial analysts used it to stay up to date on plants that represented the largest investments of owner utilities and energy traders avidly devoured the report in an attempt to stay one step ahead of their competitors.

Nuclear power plants produce about 20 percent of U.S. electricity and are among the cheapest sources of power. When a reactor trips off line or is deliberately shut down it makes a very large dent in its owners' power supply and replacement power must be purchased, often at a cost much higher than that of producing it at the nuclear plant.

The utilities owning nuclear plants are often loath to provide plant information for competitive reasons, but the NRC assembled the data daily in order to encourage acceptance of nuclear power. It would like to continue to do so.

"We understand the plant status report is sorely missed," Dricks said, "not just by the trade press but by John Q. Citizen who likes to log onto the Web site and find out if the plant he lives near is up or down."

A case in point was provided Wednesday by Entergy Corp.'s Indian Point Unit 2 reactor near Buchanan, N.Y., for reasons not yet reported. The outage came to light only because Entergy alerted Westchester County, N.Y., to say that no safety problems were involved.

Under its previous owner, Consolidated Edison Co. of New York, Indian Point Unit 2 provided many surprises, some of them safety-related, and residents are justifiably nervous about the plant. Energy traders also kept a close watch on the reactor because when it went off line it meant that Con Edison was in the market for 961 megawatts of wholesale power.

Without the NRC's daily plant status report, both groups have been kept in the dark, as have journalists who report these matters to the dwindling number of people who don't have access to the Internet.

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