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Company's Safety Strong Campaign demonstrating early success

(Erwin, Tenn.) – Nuclear Fuel Services, Inc. (NFS) launched a campaign in December of last year dedicated to making the fuel manufacturer a model for the nuclear business. The initiative, termed 'Safety Strong', has unified the company's employees toward becoming the best in the business.

“While government regulators and industry experts agree that NFS continued to maintain safe operation at the Erwin plant, I wasn't satisfied with our performance,” said Tim Lindstrom, NFS Executive Vice-President and General Manager. “I didn't want to just focus on meeting the regulations, but exceeding them. Our goal is to become the best in safety and regulatory compliance in the industry by 2011.” Lindstrom's experience as a U.S. Navy submarine commander brought a whole new commitment to excellence at the Erwin plant.

NFS' union employees support the company's emphasis on safety. “The United Steelworkers union, Local 9677, is behind the Safety Strong effort,” explained union local president Debra Greene. “Our local union is pleased with NFS' commitment to a heightened and finely tuned safety culture at our worksite and we firmly support any effort that genuinely seeks to improve the safety of our workers and our community.”

The company has gone beyond the commitments it made to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) in 2006 to conduct a study by industry experts into the safety culture of the company. NFS asked the experts to compare the company's operations to the nuclear industry's best facilities in the areas of safety compliance.

The experts were assembled to serve as the NFS Safety Culture Board of Advisors, collectively know as the SCUBA Team. Begun in May 2007, the SCUBA Team surveyed employees, observed actual work within the plant and compared their findings

to operations at America's best performing nuclear power plants and fuel manufacturing facilities. The report determined areas of relative strength and weakness; identified needs for improvement in organizational safety culture; and established a baseline of information for NFS to track its progress.

That comprehensive review found that improvements were necessary in a variety of areas if the company wanted to be the best in the industry, including: maintenance, procedural compliance, supervisory oversight and a commitment by senior management to safety as its first priority. The SCUBA Team found that minimum NRC requirements were met in all areas. NFS will provide the SCUBA Team's report and the company's plan to achieve safety culture improvements to the NRC on May 16th.

"One of the findings of the report is that because NFS is unique in its operations, it did not have a proper frame of reference as to what other nuclear operations did to assure safety," explained Lindstrom. "We've already sent teams of NFS employees to other nuclear plants to observe and learn how those plants achieve excellence. We're incorporating several new improvements at the NFS plant from what they learned in their visits."

NFS will invest several million dollars in plant infrastructure and maintenance improvements. The investments will be to enhance engineered controls and reduce opportunities for human error in production facilities. Meanwhile, several new training and oversight personnel will be hired to increase the staff specifically assigned to assuring safety compliance. Teams with senior level oversight are already at work on program-specific tasks. The teams include union and salaried employees.

"NFS is not where we want it to be today because our goal is to be the best in the business in safety," concluded Lindstrom. "Our effort will take time, money and a consistent focus that will succeed."