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## **NRC: Nuclear Fuel's safety issues improving**

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ERWIN — Procedural compliance at Nuclear Fuel Services improved, but the company needs to continue getting better with the weaknesses identified in its latest license performance review, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission said.

The NRC recently informed NFS President and Chief Executive Officer Dwight Ferguson of the results of its review of the company's performance between Jan. 1 and July 5.

"(The) NRC noted an improvement in procedural compliance for this assessment period due to the reduced number of procedural violations identified," a letter earlier this month to Ferguson said.

"However, violations were identified this period, and NFS management should continue their improvement efforts in this area, particularly in regard to adherence to engineering procedures."

The conclusion was different than the results in NFS' last performance review in which the NRC noted an "upward trend" in procedural violations.

At that time, the NRC said violations showed "declining regulatory performance" in that area.

NFS spokesman Tony Treadway said the company has been focused on its Safety Strong program. This all-encompassing program is having an effect, but NFS is working to reduce even minor violations, Treadway said.

"We are seeing improvement," he said. "We're seeing results. We think it's a significant improvement in performance."

The performance review showed NFS did not need improvement in two of the five areas examined. One of those is material control and accounting, physical protection, classified material and information security. The other is safety licensing and putting into action the safety culture improvement plan.

The NRC said NFS did not have any specific areas to improve in nuclear criticality safety, fire safety and plant operations. But the federal agency said NFS did not adequately verify that process pipe sleeves for firewall penetrations were present.

Also, NFS did not sufficiently control transfer of bowls from the centrifuge station to the bowl cleaning station "to assure subcritical margin."

The NRC said NFS' corrective measures were adequate.

According to the NRC, NFS did not have specific improvement areas in radiation protection and environmental protection. The federal agency said there were two instances in which procedures were not followed in the donning and removal of protective equipment.

The NRC said those cases were isolated and had a low safety significance.

The NRC had the same assessment about NFS' performance in areas such as training, maintenance and surveillance. It said the company's management is making "significant improvements" to its modification control program.

The NRC said there were three examples in which NFS did not follow procedures in the removal of a safety control, the installation of a pump and not revising procedures and conduct training on an equipment change.

"NFS management's attention and corrective actions on procedural compliance issues, especially the implementation of the new configuration management program, has demonstrated to the NRC that these isolated examples do not constitute a continuation of the previous areas needing improvement," the NRC said. "However, NFS management should continue to strive to improve their safety performance."

The NRC formally will review NFS' performance at a public meeting next Thursday at 7 p.m. at the company's training center at the corner of the Jackson-Love Highway and Carolina Avenue.

The public also can talk to NRC representatives informally from 6:30-7 p.m. The day before at 2 p.m., the NRC will hold another public meeting at the training center to discuss NFS' progress on its safety culture improvement plan. Treadway said NFS is "well into that program."