

Utility Improves from NRC's Regulatory Oversight Process Column 4 to Column 1 Status

Overview

Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station, a power plant west of Phoenix, AZ, was placed in Column 4 of the NRC's Regulatory Oversight Process, resulting in a significant increase in regulatory oversight. Engineering Programs were isolated, disjointed and numerous violations and programmatic issues were unfolding.

GSE TrueNorth partnered with Palo Verde Programs personnel to identify and isolate the problems by evaluating both program effectiveness and equipment reliability. GSE TrueNorth utilized a systematic process enabling Palo Verde to return to a Column 1 status. TrueNorth then mentored and trained Palo Verde personnel on the new processes, enabling them to better identify and solve future issues.

Customer: Palo Verde
Plant Type: Nuclear
Solution: Engineering Program
Benchmark Gap Analysis & Assessments



Challenge

The NRC's Regulatory Oversight Process Column 4 was a result of repetitive degraded cornerstone, multiple degraded cornerstones, multiple YELLOW inputs and one RED input, which indicate longstanding issues or significant reduction in safety margin. Continued degradation of the plant's programs affected their ability to ensure regulatory compliance and could have resulted in being placed in Column 5: Unacceptable Performance.

Performance deterioration of programs results in increased site manpower demands, program update costs, additional training and possible regulatory fines. Failure of Engineering Programs results in the decreased ability to protect the health and safety of the general public and ultimately the station's ability to generate electricity and revenue.

Solution

GSE TrueNorth's Engineering was contracted to perform a series of Benchmark Gap Analyses and Program Assessments for 21 of the affected Engineering Programs.

GSE TrueNorth's Engineering Program experience, expertise and proven assessment processes were used to determine the areas that required improvement. This determination was based on technical content, program structure, implementation process and periodic maintenance activities. Additionally, GSE TrueNorth trained and mentored station personnel on the new program updates and processes.

Results

As a result of GSE TrueNorth consulting's efforts, Palo Verde is now in Column 1 (or minimum) Regulatory Oversight. Palo Verde's Director of Engineering stated that this improvement was due to the efforts of GSE TrueNorth. Palo Verde values the experience and expertise of GSE TrueNorth to evaluate Engineering Programs with an objective view while providing solid solutions.

GSE TrueNorth provides continued support to Palo Verde and is committed to improving their Engineering Programs in an effective, fully compliant way, reducing the need for further regulatory oversight and fines.

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