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**INTERNATIONAL EARLY WARNING SYSTEM ON MILLENNIUM BUG
SUCCESSFULLY TESTED BY THE NUCLEAR ENERGY AGENCY**

An international Y2K Emergency Warning System (YEWS) to assist in contingency planning for nuclear power plants during the year 2000 transition was successfully tested on 15 October 1999 by the OECD Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA). This international test was conducted in co-ordination with another drill run by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (U.S. NRC). The exercise demonstrated the ability of the system to retrieve information internationally on the status of nuclear power plants. Thirteen countries participated in providing sample status reports during the exercise.

The Y2K problem concerns possible problems that may be experienced by computers with the arrival of the year 2000. The use of interconnected computer systems and the reliance placed on embedded systems that include chips and various types of software, has grown to the point where today they are to be found in virtually all electronic appliances used in homes and offices. Governments, safety authorities and industry around the world are concerned with this problem. Within the electric power industry, these chips are found in electrical transmission and distribution systems, communication systems, data systems, and equipment and components in power stations, including nuclear power plants.

YEWS is designed as a secure, proprietary, Internet-based communications system that will allow for rapid transmission of information on the status of nuclear facility operations, local grid stability and telecommunications during the Y2K transition period. The NEA has invited regulatory authorities and nuclear operators throughout the world to participate in this system. YEWS is a free service. Participation in it is voluntary and open to all countries who agree to abide by its terms of use. For security reasons, access to YEWS is restricted to participants who make a formal request for access and have a bonafide reason to participate.

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YEWS is not an emergency notification system. It provides close to real-time information on the status of nuclear facility operations in NEA Member and non-member countries. Unlike other reporting systems, it has provisions for reporting the absence of Y2K effects as well as actual problems. In addition, the reporting threshold is lower than for existing emergency notification systems and is not restricted to events with radiological consequences.

Twenty-five countries, both NEA Member countries and non-member countries, have nominated over 200 contacts to participate. Currently, the following countries and organisations are participating: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea (Republic of), Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America, the Nuclear Energy Agency and the International Energy Agency.

Following incorporation of further improvements made to YEWS based on the results of the exercise, the system will be readied for operation during the millennium transition period. For further information on YEWS, please contact Barry Kaufer (barry.kaufer@oecd.org) or Clarence Breskovic (cpb@nrc.gov).