River Bend plant gets good ratings in assessment

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ST. FRANCISVILLE — A U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission official said Wednesday that Gulf States Utilities Co. will be used as “an example of good performance to other utilities” for the operation of its River Bend nuclear power plant during a recent 18-month period.

"Please, please do not let us down in 1989," said Jose Calvo, who is in charge of regulating nuclear power plant reactors in two regions of the United States. Calvo's comments came during a meeting between NRC officials and River Bend's management to discuss the latest assessment of the plant's performance.

River Bend received three Category 1, three Category 2 and one Category 3 rating in the Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance report for the period from April 1, 1987, to Sept. 30, 1988.

The ratings were issued in seven "functional areas" relating to nuclear plant safety and the environment.

A Category 1 rating in a functional area indicates the plant's performance substantially exceeded regulatory requirements, while a Category 2 rating indicates a level of performance "above that needed to meet regulatory requirements," according to the NRC definitions.

GSU received its only Category 3 rating in the area of plant security, meaning that the performance does not significantly exceed that needed to meet minimal regulatory requirements.

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Senior Vice President James Deddens, who heads GSU's River Bend Nuclear Group, said the plant staff is not satisfied with meeting "minimal acceptable standards" and the Category 3 in the area of security is unacceptable.

"We'll take your message to heart," Deddens said, "and get to the root cause of the problems."