

## Plant still has some problems with whistleblowers, officials say

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PHOENIX (AP) — The Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station continues to have problems in handling employees with concerns about safety and other plant procedures, federal officials say.

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission officials called the plant west of Phoenix safe but said it needs to improve how it handles worried employees.

NRC Region V Regional Administrator Bobby H. Faulkenberry said Palo Verde is among the facilities with the highest instance of allegations. But he said the problem at the 4,000-employee plant isn't institutional.

"There are small pockets of management that still haven't gotten the message of how (they) should act," Faulkenberry said at a news conference Thursday.

Faulkenberry said his office in Walnut Creek, Calif., and Palo Verde officials are trying to find the remaining resisters.

Each year, the NRC gets about 800 complaints about U.S. plants. Faulkenberry said the agency begins a review of all reports within a few days and said his office has a task force designed to protect workers who tell them about concerns at their plants.

"Our goal is to come down so that not a single (person with an allegation) feels uncomfortable

about coming to us," he said.

He said the NRC isn't large enough to find all the problems that exist at a plant and said it relies on workers to inform the agency of problems.

Faulkenberry said the plant 55 miles west of downtown Phoenix could be above-average performer.

In an NRC report covering activities from March 1, 1992, to May 31, 1993, the plant slipped slightly but still got good ratings.

Faulkenberry said all nuclear plants have some problems with employee error but that Palo Verde has more problems than NRC officials want to see.