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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$12,500 FINE AGAINST IOWA ELECTRIC
FOR VIOLATIONS OF NRC RADIATION PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$12,500 fine against Iowa Electric Light and Power Company for violations of NRC radiation protection requirements at the Duane Arnold nuclear power station. The facility is located at Palo, Iowa.

The violations resulted from an incident on March 15, 1992, in which two workers received higher than anticipated radiation exposures while performing inspection work on a pipe in the reactor recirculation system. The plant was shut down at the time of the work.

Neither worker received a radiation exposure that exceeded NRC limits.

A special NRC inspection determined that the radiation survey of the work area, performed before the work began, was inadequate and that the workers were not properly trained on the use of the electronic radiation dose monitors they were using. The company was cited for these two violations of NRC requirements.

The radiation survey before the work began showed radiation levels to be 800 millirems per hour, although the specific work location was not checked. Later surveys of the actual work location measured the levels to be substantially higher -- as high as 15,000 millirems per hour. (A millirem is a standard measure of radiation exposure.)

The workers were issued electronic radiation dose measuring devices which were set to produce an audible alarm at an accumulated dose of 250 millirems or at a dose rate of 2,000 millirems per hour.

When one worker entered the work area, the dose rate alarm sounded. The worker informed his supervisor of the alarm, but both the worker and the supervisor stated they were unaware of

the utility's policy to leave a work area if the alarm sounded. Both believed no action was required until the second alarm --the accumulated dose alarm -- sounded.

The worker left the work area for additional equipment with the radiation measuring device showing an accumulated dose of 180 millirem. He returned to the work area and completed his tasks with the accumulated dose alarm sounding the entire time. The worker checked the device again and noted that it showed an accumulated dose of 1,310 millirem. (The NRC limit is 3,000 millirem in a three-month period.)

Plant radiation protection personnel directed him to leave the work area; the second worker was also directed to leave the area.

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