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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$12,500 FINE AGAINST NORTHERN STATES POWER
FOR VIOLATION OF NRC REQUIREMENTS IN FEBRUARY 1992 INCIDENT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$12,500 fine against Northern States Power Company for a violation of NRC requirements in a February 20, 1992, incident at Unit 2 of the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Station. Prairie Island is located at Red Wing, MN.

The incident occurred while the unit was shut down for refueling. The water level was being lowered in the reactor vessel to allow blocking of the pipes to the unit's steam generators for testing.

Because of inaccurate measurements of the water level in the reactor, water was lowered below the level needed for continued operation of the shutdown cooling system pump. The operating pump was then shut off by control room operators. The operators subsequently added water to the reactor from another source and restarted another shutdown cooling system pump.

An NRC Augmented Inspection Team conducted a special inspection February 22-25, 1992, to review the circumstances of the incident.

The utility was cited for having an inadequate procedure for lowering the water level in the reactor vessel. The procedure did not have adequate directions for use of a transparent plastic tube for level measurement and did not provide adequate guidance on the effects of reactor cooling system pressure on the level measurements.

According to NRC Regional Administrator A. Bert Davis, the actual impact of this incident on plant nuclear safety was minimal. The NRC is concerned, however, about interruptions of shutdown cooling for the reactor because some reactor safety systems that could provide emergency cooling are not required to be operable when the plant is shut down.

The utility has until June 22, 1992, to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the utility may request a hearing.

