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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$125,000 FINE FOR ALLEGED  
VIOLATIONS OF NRC REQUIREMENTS AT OCONEE NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$125,000 civil penalty against Duke Power Company for alleged violations of NRC requirements at its Oconee nuclear power plant located near Seneca, South Carolina.

The NRC said the action was the result of the findings of special Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) inspections at Oconee on September 9-13 and September 20-25, 1991, which looked into the circumstances associated with a September 7, 1991, degradation of the Unit 1 decay heat removal system and over-pressurization of the Unit 1 low pressure injection (LPI) system on September 19-20, 1991.

On September 7, while in a refueling outage, an employee reported from the reactor building to the control room that he saw steam coming from the open reactor vessel and that water in the vessel was churning. It was subsequently determined that an improperly set valve had resulted in heat not being removed from the shutdown reactor water for about four hours. No damage occurred.

On September 19-20, while still in the refueling outage, personnel in the control room apparently failed to follow a start-up procedure which resulted in the over-pressurization of pipes in portions of the LPI system and the loss of about 12,400 gallons of reactor cooling water to the auxiliary building floor.

NRC officials sent Duke Power a letter dated February 3, 1992, which said the NRC was concerned because both events indicated inadequate management oversight of shutdown operations and inappropriate execution of operator responsibilities during shutdown operations and that a civil penalty of \$125,000 was being proposed.

The base civil penalty for the violation associated with each event is \$50,000, but the NRC said the civil penalty was increased for the first event because of previous problems at Oconee associated with outage activities.

The company has 30 days from the receipt of the Notice of Violation to either pay the fine or protest it, in whole or in part.

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