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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$75,000 FINE
AGAINST CONSUMERS POWER COMPANY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$75,000 fine against Consumers Power Company for safety components at the Palisades nuclear power station which might not function under certain accident conditions.

The potential equipment deficiencies were initially identified by a utility contractor in December 1990, but the utility deferred a detailed review of the contractor's findings until November 1991.

In February 1992, the utility determined that the main steam isolation valves might not function during a steam line break outside the reactor containment because a component had not been tested to assure it would function under harsh accident conditions.

The main steam isolation valves are in the steam lines from the plant's steam generators to the turbine. They would be needed under certain accident conditions to prevent the flow of radioactive gases through the steam lines out of the reactor containment or to close off a possible steam leak outside the containment.

The plant was shut down on February 6, 1992, to correct the problem, which involved actuator valves. The valves were relocated to a potentially less harsh area.

The NRC requires that safety components be tested or otherwise qualified to perform in the harsh conditions that might be present in a major reactor accident. These conditions include heat, moisture and radiation.

The utility's detailed review of the contractor's report also identified six other types of components that had not been shown to meet the accident requirements. These components included position switches, actuating valves and measuring devices for radiation, heat and steam flow.

Once the deficiencies were identified by the utility, they were promptly reported to the NRC, as required. These deficiencies were subsequently resolved by the utility.

The review of safety components by the contractor was initiated by the utility because of previous problems with qualification of equipment to perform under accident conditions.

NRC Regional Administrator A. Bert Davis noted: "The contractor's report was briefly reviewed upon its receipt to assess the significance of the items raised and to determine what, if any, immediate corrective actions were necessary. However, this review was not sufficiently comprehensive nor given sufficient management attention to assure that items having potential impact on operability were promptly addressed."

Consumers Power Company has until July 2, 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.

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