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NRC STAFF PROPOSES TO FINE VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER CORPORATION \$50,000

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation for three alleged violations of NRC requirements at its Vermont Yankee Nuclear Plant, in Vernon, VT. The staff proposed a \$50,000 fine.

Vermont Yankee informed NRC inspectors of one of the alleged violations. The other two were found by NRC inspectors during a safety inspection at the site from April 14 through 16, 1993. The inspectors had been sent there to look into the circumstances surrounding the failure by Vermont Yankee to shut down the reactor when a control rod array (four adjacent rods) took longer than required to move 5 percent into the core during a test of the control rod control system.

During testing of the control rod drive system in October of last year, to verify it was working as designed, one array of control rods failed to meet the required average time to move the required 5 percent of the full insertion distance into the reactor core. These requirements are contained in technical specifications, which are a part of the NRC operating license for Vermont Yankee. During that test, the average time for all the control rods to be fully inserted into the core met the required time limit. A subsequent retest was performed, which was successful. The problem with the original test was not resolved and the reactor was not shut down as required by technical specifications. A similar test was performed in April 1993. In that case, neither the core-wide time nor the average for seven different arrays met the technical specification time limits for moving five percent of the full insertion distance.

The reactor was shutdown in April for an unrelated problem. Vermont Yankee has since corrected the problem with rod speed by repairing the valves in all the reactor control rod drive system hydraulic control units.

Vermont Yankee is being cited for three violations stemming from their response to these tests: failing to shut down the plant in October when one control rod array did not move into the core at the proper speed; failing to adequately evaluate all test results to ensure that all test requirements had been met; and, failing to determine the cause of the condition and then take corrective action to prevent its recurrence.

In a letter to Vermont Yankee, Thomas T. Martin, Regional Administrator, NRC Region I, said, "The safety consequence of the increased scram insertion time was minimal because the ability of the control rods to protect against fuel damage was not affected. Nevertheless, the NRC is concerned that no immediate actions were taken to identify the root causes of the deficiency and pursue corrective actions, and no reports were made to the NRC."

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation has 30 days either to pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn, giving its reasons for any such request. The company also has 30 days to admit or deny the alleged violations, to give reasons for them if admitted, to describe the actions it has taken or plans to take to prevent their happening in the future, and to give the date by which it expects to be in full compliance with NRC requirements.

The State of Vermont was informed of this enforcement action.