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NRC STAFF ASKS UTILITIES TO TAKE ACTIONS TO PREVENT  
BLOCKAGE OF STRAINERS IN EMERGENCY COOLING SYSTEMS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has requested utilities licensed to operate nuclear power plants to take steps to assure that strainers in their emergency core cooling systems would not become blocked by fibrous debris in the unlikely event of a loss-of-coolant accident. Blockage of the strainers could impact on the proper operation of the emergency core cooling system if it were needed to provide emergency cooling to the reactor core.

The request was made in the light of a 1993 incident at the Perry nuclear power plant in Ohio which resulted in clogging of strainers in the emergency core cooling system by glass fibers from temporary drywell cooling filter material that had been inadvertently dropped into the suppression pool and corrosion products that had been filtered from the pool by the glass fibers adhering to the surface of the strainer.

As a result, the staff has requested utilities licensed to operate nuclear power plants to: (1) identify fibrous air filters or other temporary sources of fibrous material, not designed to withstand a loss-of-coolant accident, which are installed or stored in the primary containment and to take any immediate compensatory actions which may be necessary to assure that the emergency core cooling system will work properly if it is needed; and (2) take prompt action to remove any such material. Because of the low probability of a loss-of-coolant accident, the NRC staff considers removal of this material at the next shutdown or within 120 days, whichever comes first, to be sufficiently prompt.

Licensees also are required to report within 30 days stating if these actions have been or will be performed and, if the use of fibrous material is confirmed, include the locations and quantity of use, any immediate compensatory measures taken and the current schedule for removing the material. If licensees propose not to take the actions requested, they are to provide

the staff, within 30 days, with their proposed alternative course of action and a justification for it. A written report also is to be provided to the staff within 30 days of completion of these actions.

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