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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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NRC STAFF CITES GPU NUCLEAR CORPORATION FOR AN ALLEGED VIOLATION  
AT THE OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT; PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited GPU Nuclear Corporation for an alleged violation of NRC requirements at its Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Forked River, NJ. The staff proposes a \$50,000 fine.

From January 26 through February 2, 1993, an NRC Augmented Inspection Team (AIT) looked into the circumstances of an event at the Oyster Creek plant between January 23 and 25, 1993, in which the temperature of the water in the reactor rose above 212 degrees Fahrenheit. That is a regulatory limit during refueling operations. It was a violation of the plant's technical specifications.

Plant specifications require that whenever the reactor coolant system (RCS) water temperature rises above 212° F, certain safety systems must be operable, the containment must be sealed, and a shift technical supervisor must be on duty. Some of the plant's safety systems were not capable of operating as designed, the containment was open, and there was no shift technical supervisor on duty when the temperature of the RCS water rose above 212° F.

Oyster Creek was in a refueling outage at the time. While doing some maintenance and testing, workers used a temporary procedure which inadvertently failed to provide sufficient forced flow cooling water through the reactor core to keep the water temperature within the prescribed limits. Once control room operators discovered that the water was heating up, they increased core cooling water flow and reduced the water temperature below 212° F.

GPU Nuclear is being cited for allegedly violating the plant technical specification that requires activities affecting safe plant operations be controlled by procedures. In this case, the AIT determined that the root cause of the problem was the licensee's failure to properly control activities, and that a temporary procedure change (TPC) to the shutdown cooling system operating procedure led to the "heat up."

In a letter to GPU Nuclear, Thomas T. Martin, Regional Administrator, NRC Region I, said, "The NRC recognizes that the safety impact of the plant 'heat up' was low in that the reactor core remained adequately cooled throughout the event and there was no fuel damage or release of radioactivity. Nevertheless, a programmatic weakness in your TPC process allowed implementation of this substantive TPC after minimal review and led to your failure to maintain the plant within TS limits. This weakness is safety-significant and is a regulatory concern because it permits limited technical and safety reviews before a substantive change is implemented."

The company 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 taken or planned 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 New Jersey was informed of this enforcement action.

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