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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$100,000 FINE AGAINST COMMONWEALTH EDISON FOR A RADIATION PROTECTION VIOLATION AT QUAD CITIES NUCLEAR STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$100,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for a violation of NRC radiation protection requirements at the Quad Cities Nuclear Power Station. The two-reactor facility is located in Cordova, Illinois.

The company was cited for an August 8 violation involving a deliberate removal of a sealed radiation source, containing strontium-90, from its holder. The source was placed in the stored personal clothing of a contract laborer while the laborer was working at the plant. The radiation source is normally used to check the operability of hand-held radiation detection instruments.

As the female contract laborer attempted to leave the turbine building after completion of her work, she set off the alarms of exit monitors. Surveys located the coin-sized radiation source in her right back pants pocket. The period of exposure to the laborer was estimated at 12 minutes, and the radiation dose to a small area of skin was estimated to be about 22 rem. NRC's annual limit is 50 rem to the skin. (A rem is a standard measure of radiation exposure). No adverse health effects would be expected from such a dose.

Prior to entering the work area, the laborer had removed her outer clothing and donned work coveralls in a change area on the ground floor of the Unit 1 turbine building. This is an unattended open change area. When she completed her work, she changed out of these coveralls into personal clothing in which the source had been placed. The individual who deliberately placed the radiation source in the laborer's pocket has not been identified.

NRC Regional Administrator John B. Martin, in notifying the utility of the fine, stated: "The fact that such an event can and did occur at Quad Cities Station is evidence of a lack of respect for radiological hazards and management expectations."

NRC conducted a special inspection from August 15 to August 24 to review the circumstances surrounding the event.

The utility's corrective actions included: initiating a security investigation with FBI involvement; removing all similar radiation sources from unrestricted use; and improving procedures and training in contamination surveys.

A second violation was also cited by the NRC staff, but no fine was assessed. The company was cited for an inadequate survey because the initial radiation survey was not sufficiently thorough enough to locate the radiation source in the laborer's clothing. The source was found during a second survey.

Commonwealth Edison has until November 17 to pay the proposed fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the company may request a hearing.

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