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NRC STAFF CITES GPU NUCLEAR CORPORATION FOR ALLEGED RADIATION SAFETY VIOLATIONS AT THE OYSTER CREEK NUCLEAR PLANT; PROPOSES \$75,000 FINE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited GPU Nuclear Corporation for a number of alleged violations of radiation safety requirements at its Oyster Creek Nuclear Generating Station in Forked River, NJ. The staff has proposed a \$75,000 fine.

On May 7, and again on May 11, workers entered an area administratively controlled as a locked high radiation area to begin reducing radioactive contamination in this part of the New Radwaste Building on the site. The utility failed to assure that adequate radiation surveys were completed before the May 7 entry, in order to control potential radiation exposure of the workers, and failed to assign the use of the proper respiratory equipment to prevent their inhaling radioactive dust during the May 11 work. One of two workers sent into the heavily contaminated area on May 11 was not provided with a "breathing zone analyzer" and an inadequate evaluation of the contamination hazard resulted in the assignment of the wrong type of respirators to the workers. Although one worker inhaled a small amount of radioactive material, it was within NRC radiation protection limits and was not considered to be injurious.

A large, unplanned exposure was averted during the work on May 7 when one of the workers, on entering the radiation area, noticed that his radiation dose meter showed a high radiation dose rate. The three workers involved in this entry promptly left the area.

After each occurrence, the company realized that some required procedures had not been followed. Although this was not required to be reported to the NRC, Oyster Creek officials informed the NRC resident inspectors of their findings, and that led to a follow-up inspection at Oyster Creek on May 17 and 18, 1993, by NRC radiation specialists.

GPU Nuclear was cited for five alleged violations of NRC requirements: 1) failing to prepare a radiation work permit that clearly defined the scope of the work; 2) failing to perform radiation surveys of a work area and provide adequate instructions to workers; 3) failing to perform air sampling in order to select proper respiratory equipment; 4) failing to conduct proper air sampling during work; and, 5) having inadequate procedures for keeping worker radiation exposures

as low as is reasonably achievable.

In a letter to the licensee, Thomas T. Martin, Regional Administrator, NRC Region I, said, "The five violations of NRC requirements collectively represent a significant continuing problem in your radiological safety program and a lack of adequate attention to NRC requirements."

The normal fine for such violations is \$50,000. It was increased by 50 percent, to \$75,000, because GPU Nuclear's long-term corrective actions were not considered timely or adequate to prevent recurrence, and because the licensee had a prior violation in 1991 involving similar weaknesses in its radiological controls program.

GPU Nuclear 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 New Jersey was informed of this enforcement action.

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