

No. 94-25
RELEASE
Tel. 301-504-2250
1994)

FOR IMMEDIATE

(Thursday, February 10,

NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST CONSUMERS POWER COMPANY
FOR SAFETY VIOLATIONS AT PALISADES NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$50,000 fine against Consumers Power Company for a violation of NRC safety requirements for control of electrical design activities at the Palisades Nuclear Power Station. The plant is located near South Haven, Michigan.

In May 1993 the utility changed the setpoints on devices, called thermal overloads, which protect cooling fan motors from excessive electrical current which might damage the motors. The modified devices would have caused the motors to shut off at or near the normal operating current instead of at higher than normal current.

The four affected fans provided cooling for two rooms at the plant which contain equipment for the emergency core cooling system and other safety equipment. The pumps and other equipment are not used during normal plant operations.

The problem was discovered during routine testing of the fan motors in August 1993. The utility subsequently replaced the thermal overloads with ones having the correct settings.

The utility was also cited for a second electrical design problem for electrical relays in the circuits which actuate safety systems if high pressure or high radiation levels are detected in the reactor containment. No fine was proposed for this violation.

The relays, which were installed in 1990, would not have functioned under certain seismic conditions or low voltage conditions. The problem was found during testing in August 1993, and the relays were subsequently repaired.

"We are concerned that these violations are indicative of significant weaknesses in the engineering controls essential for safe conduct of important activities," stated John B. Martin, NRC Regional Administrator, in notifying the utility of the fine. "Licensees...must ensure that any changes to the plant or its equipment are properly evaluated for effects on safety."

Consumers Power Company has until March 11, 1994, to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the utility may request a hearing.

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