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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$75,000 FINE AGAINST WISCONSIN ELECTRIC COMPANY FOR SAFETY SYSTEM MADE INOPERABLE BY TEMPORARY PLUG

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$75,000 fine against Wisconsin Electric Power Company for operating Unit 2 of the Point Beach Nuclear Power Station while a portion of a safety system was inoperable because of a temporary plug left in the piping following a modification in 1991.

The material was found in a pump that is part of the plant's emergency systems. It was found during system testing September 17-18, 1992. After the test showed abnormally low water flow through the pump, the utility dismantled the pump and found a foam disk blocking the pump internals. The disk had been left in the piping following a system modification during the Fall 1991 refueling outage. The disk had been used to keep foreign materials out of the piping during the modification.

The affected pump and piping system would be used under some configurations of the emergency core cooling system in the event of a major accident. There is a parallel pump and piping system which would be available to perform the safety functions of the degraded system.

The company was cited for operating Point Beach Unit 2 while the safety system was inoperable because of the obstruction and for failing to have an adequate procedure to assure that the piping was free of obstructions following the system modification in 1991.

As corrective action, the utility thoroughly inspected the safety system piping of both Unit 1 and Unit 2 to assure there were no additional obstructions. Plant procedures are being revised to better control modification work and identify and remove any construction-related debris.

Wisconsin Electric has until January 7, 1993, 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.