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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE  
FOR APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT WNP-2

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has informed Washington Public Power Supply System that it proposes to fine the utility \$50,000 for apparent violations of NRC requirements at the Washington Nuclear Project-2 (WNP-2) nuclear power plant near Richland, Washington.

The Supply System has 30 days to respond to the citation. During that time, it may pay the civil penalty or protest it. If a protest is denied, the utility may ask for a hearing.

NRC is taking this enforcement action as the result of two special inspections and an investigation earlier this year which reviewed several apparent failures to follow plant procedures at WNP-2. The agency has concluded that nine violations occurred which, taken together, constitute a serious enough regulatory problem to justify a civil penalty. Eight of the violations occurred in February, and the other occurred in April.

These violations included (a) the disregard by a control room supervisor of procedural requirements concerning a reactor water cleanup system valve; (b) a failure to assure that a required lock-seal was in place on a valve; (c) several failures to follow procedures designed to assure the safety of equipment and personnel operating it; (d) a procedural error which resulted in a turbine and reactor shutdown; and (e) failures to assure the operability of all equipment required during plant heat-up, cool-down, or power operation.

In his letter informing the Supply System of the proposed fine, NRC Regional Administrator L. Joe Callan noted that all the violations involve human performance problems at WNP-2 which have been the subject of concern by both NRC and the Supply System. "In the aggregate," he said, "the NRC views these violations as an indication that the Supply System's previous efforts to improve human performance and correct historical problems with respect to procedural compliance and attention to detail have not been fully successful."

Mr. Callan cited similar personnel errors which occurred in 1993 and 1994 — one of which resulted in foreign material dropping into the reactor vessel — and added: "While the individual violations addressed in the instant action did not result in any significant safety consequences, it is the continuation of violations of this type that is of most concern to the NRC because continuing performance at this level has the potential to lead to incidents of greater safety significance."

The regional administrator said the Supply System independently identified and was dealing with the fundamental human performance problem at WNP-2 and now appears to be taking a comprehensive approach to correct the situation. But he said it remains to be determined whether these corrective measures will be effective.

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