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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST CONSUMERS POWER COMPANY
FOR VIOLATIONS OF NRC SAFETY REQUIREMENTS AT PALISADES PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$50,000 fine against Consumers Power Company for having an inoperable safety system pump at the Palisades Nuclear Power Station from March through May 1991.

The inoperable pump was in the safety system designed to spray water into the reactor containment building to reduce the buildup of pressure in the unlikely event of an accident. Two other containment spray pumps were operable during this time period.

An NRC inspection determined that the three containment spray pumps had been tested in February 1991 while the plant was shut down and found to be operable. Because the plant was shut down, the pumps were disabled by removing their control power fuses. This is a routine practice to prevent the pumps from starting inadvertently during an outage.

The fuses were reinstalled in March 1991, but the pumps were not tested to assure they were operable. The plant started up on March 10.

On May 23, 1991, one of the pumps was found to be inoperable during a routine periodic test. After the fuses were removed, checked, and replaced, the pump was found to be operable. The cause of the pump failing to start in the test was apparently an inadequate contact between the fuses and the circuit breaker holding them.

Consumers Power Company was cited for two violations associated with the pump: (1) Failing to have adequate written procedures to test the containment spray pumps after the fuses were put in place; and (2) Starting up and operating the plant with an inoperable containment spray pump.

The utility has until December 16, 1991, to pay the proposed fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, Consumers Power may request a hearing.

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