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

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$50,000 fine against Consumers Power Company for violations of NRC requirements that occurred during a June 15 event at the Palisades nuclear power plant near South Haven, Michigan.

The proposed NRC staff action is based on a review of circumstances surrounding the failure of the licensee to uncouple one control rod before removal of the reactor vessel head in preparation for refueling. There were no adverse consequences to the public.

In notifying Consumers Power of the proposed fine, NRC Regional Administrator John B. Martin stated that an inspection by the NRC from June 15-25 identified five violations of NRC requirements: 1) failure of a shift supervisor to brief the auxiliary operators involved before the control rod uncoupling; 2) failure of the auxiliary operators to conduct a dry run on a mock-up before the uncoupling; 3) a failure to notify the control room after each control rod drive mechanism was uncoupled; 4) a failure to retain the working copy of the rod uncoupling procedure; and 5) an inadequate procedure for verifying that the rods were uncoupled during removal of the reactor vessel head.

Mr. Martin noted that these failures represented "a breakdown in controls that are essential for safe conduct of important activities. . . Furthermore, the unorganized manner in which this evolution occurred is unacceptable for nuclear power plant operations. . ."

Mr. Martin said the proposed civil penalty of \$50,000 was being levied to convey the NRC's concern over the licensee's "failure to instill in individuals a proper regard for strict procedural compliance and to emphasize the need for careful attention to the control and conduct of licensed activities."

Consumers Power has 30 days in which to pay the proposed fine or protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the licensee may request a hearing.

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