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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$187,500 FINE AGAINST  
COMMONWEALTH EDISON COMPANY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$187,500 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for violations of NRC requirements resulting from operation and maintenance testing errors at the Dresden nuclear power station.

The violations were identified in special NRC inspections conducted August through November 1991.

The company was cited for failing to test a valve in a Unit 3 containment vent line after maintenance was performed on the valve in February 1990. Additional violations were associated with four operational problems during 1991 at the Dresden Units 2 and 3. (Dresden Unit 1 was shut down in 1978.)

All of the problems were reported by the utility to the NRC. The actual safety consequences of the problems were not significant.

"Nevertheless, these events are of significant regulatory concern in that they are indicative of management's inability, despite similar previous events, to effectively deal with personnel performance problems," stated NRC Regional Administrator A. Bert Davis in notifying the utility of the fine.

In February 1990, a piston rod which opens and closes the valve in a containment vent pipe was replaced. The new rod was slightly longer than the one it replaced, causing the valve to remain partially open when it appeared to be closed.

The containment vent line is used to ventilate the containment structure housing the reactor. There are two isolation valves in sequence which close off the vent line; these valves are normally closed during plant operations. Under unlikely accident conditions, these valves would be needed to block the release of radioactive gases through the vent line. The interior valve was functioning properly, but both valves in sequence are required to be properly closed.

Commonwealth Edison was cited for failing to test the vent line for possible leakage past the valves after the 1990 maintenance. The problem was discovered in September 1991 during routine testing for possible leakage through the valves.

The other operational problems involving violations were:

-- Allowing the water temperature in the Unit 2 suppression pool to reach the NRC license limit of 95 degrees because of a problem with a portion of the high pressure backup cooling system which caused heated water to be discharged into the suppression pool. The suppression pool is a doughnut-shaped tank surrounding the reactor that is designed to control pressure inside the reactor containment during unusual operating conditions or during an accident. Temperature in the pool is controlled so that there is adequate cooling for steam that might be discharged into the pool.

Eight separate violations of NRC requirements were associated with the gradual heating of the suppression pool which went unrecognized for over 15 hours and spanned three operating shifts.

-- Draining of about 2,800 gallons of radioactively contaminated water from the control rod drive system into the reactor building during a Unit 3 refueling outage. All fuel had been removed from the reactor at the time. The draining was caused by the failure to reclose valves in the control rod drive system after they had been opened to depressurize the system.

The water was collected in the reactor building drain system and processed by the plant's radioactive waste water treatment system. There was no release of the contaminated water to the environment.

-- Failing to follow proper procedures during the routine testing of control rods while Unit 2 was operating at approximately 35 percent power on October 6, 1991. The testing procedure requires that each control rod be returned to its original position before the next control rod is inserted in the reactor core (scrammed). Because of inadequate communications among control room personnel and the failure to follow procedures, another control rod was inserted without first withdrawing the just-inserted control rod to its original position.

-- Failing to follow procedures for the movement of fuel assemblies in the Unit 3 spent fuel storage pool on October 18, 1991. The lifting handles on two fuel assemblies were damaged during repositioning of fuel assemblies. The device used to lift the spent fuel assemblies was not raised above the top of the lifting handles before the device was moved as required by the fuel handling procedure. It struck the lifting handles of two

fuel assemblies, bending the handles and damaging the lifting device.

A \$75,000 fine has been proposed for the failure to test the containment vent valve for leaking following maintenance. The violations associated with the four other problems carry a proposed fine of \$112,500.

Commonwealth Edison has until February 8, 1992, 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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