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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$100,000 IN FINES AGAINST TVA AT SEQUOYAH

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed \$100,000 in civil penalties against the Tennessee Valley Authority for violations of NRC requirements at the Sequoyah nuclear power plant near Chattanooga, Tennessee.

One group of violations relates to identification of equipment problems and corrective actions. Another group involves the failure to follow technical specifications for electrical breakers in the system that automatically shuts down the reactor.

The NRC staff combined three violations into one group and assigned a single increased severity level due to the similarity of the corrective action program deficiencies. Those violations are: 1) failure to identify the root cause and take adequate corrective actions for feedwater equipment failures; 2) failure to implement corrective actions to control use of a material susceptible to rapid aging at high temperatures in safety-related valves; and 3) failure to adequately check all equipment after a fire system sprayed water on plant equipment in July.

In a letter to TVA, NRC Regional Administrator Stewart Ebnetter wrote that "the NRC is particularly concerned that the apparent root cause of [the violations] is inadequate implementation of your corrective action program." The NRC staff is proposing a \$50,000 civil penalty for this first group of violations.

The second group also has three violations which were combined and assigned a single increased severity level because, according to Ebnetter's letter, "the violations contributed to or were a direct consequence of the underlying problem." Those violations are: 1) inadequate maintenance and testing of a reactor trip breaker which resulted in the installation of an inoperable breaker in Unit 2; 2) failure to maintain the minimum required channels of a reactor trip function; and 3) failure to follow plant procedures to evaluate operability of the breaker and report the event to the plant's shift operations supervisor.

The NRC staff has determined that the root causes for the three violations related to the reactor trip breaker were poor communications between operations, maintenance and engineering; non-conservative decision-making; training deficiencies; and poor event analysis. The NRC staff is proposing a \$50,000 civil penalty for this second group of violations, making a total of \$100,000.

The company has 30 days to either pay the fines or to protest their imposition.

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