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\$650,000 FINE PROPOSED FOR VIOLATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH INJECTING
FOAM SEALANT INTO EQUIPMENT COOLING SYSTEM AT LASALLE STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$650,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for violations of NRC requirements associated with injecting foam sealant into the water supply for the equipment cooling system at the LaSalle Nuclear Power Station near Seneca, Illinois.

The sealant was injected into the water intake structure during concrete repairs in May and June 1996. This led to the shutdown of both reactor units at the station on June 28 to remove the material from the intake structure and to inspect the equipment cooling system.

"These violations are very significant," said NRC Regional A. Bill Beach in notifying the utility of the fine. "The injected foam sealant material created a significant safety issue by threatening to block the intake of both unit's safety-related service water systems, systems required to mitigate the consequences of a design basis accident."

"Of further concern to the NRC," he told the utility, "is that significant NRC involvement...was needed to direct your staff's attention to the potential safety consequences stemming from the clogging of service water systems."

The sealant was used by a contractor to repair cracks in the concrete intake structure, called the service water tunnel. Some of the sealant passed through the concrete into the water in the tunnel.

The sealant could have clogged strainers and potentially affected the flow of water into the cooling systems for safety-related equipment, including emergency core cooling system pumps and the emergency diesel generators. This safety-related system also provides cooling water to heat exchangers which might be needed to provide reactor cooling following a major reactor accident.

"This event identified that significant weaknesses existed

in planning of work activities and oversight of contractor maintenance on safety-related structures; engineering support for plant operations; and identification, evaluation, and correction of significant safety issues at the LaSalle County Station," Mr. Beach said. "Of particular concern was the lack of appropriate safety focus and lack of a questioning attitude."

The proposed fine has two components. A \$600,000 fine was proposed for planning and performing the sealant injection as "minor maintenance" without documented instructions and procedures and for failing to promptly identify the presence of the sealant in the tunnel and take prompt corrective actions once it was identified. An additional \$50,000 fine was proposed for violations associated with the operation, testing, and the safety-related equipment cooling system.

Commonwealth Edison has until February 24 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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