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NRC STAFF PROPOSES TO FINE NORTHEAST NUCLEAR ENERGY COMPANY  
\$87,500 FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF NRC REQUIREMENTS AT MILLSTONE  
UNIT 2

The NRC staff has cited Northeast Nuclear Energy Company for three alleged violations of NRC requirements at its Millstone Nuclear Power Station, Units 1 and 2, in Waterford, Connecticut. The staff has proposed an \$87,500 fine for two of those alleged violations.

The two alleged violations for which a fine was assessed were found at Unit 2 during NRC inspections in April and May, 1994.

The first alleged violation involves three examples of failing to promptly classify occurrences at Unit 2 that constituted "unusual events," and to give timely notification to state and local officials as prescribed in the station's emergency plan: 1) on April 20, 1994, there was a leak in the reactor coolant system of about eight gallons per minute, and the operators did not declare an unusual event until prompted to do so by the NRC inspector; 2) on April 23, during a plant shutdown, the operators encountered an immovable control assembly, and did not declare an unusual event promptly, as required by the station's emergency plan, but waited more than four-and-a-half hours; and, 3) Millstone 2's technical specifications require that when a control assembly is immovable, the operators calculate the shutdown margin and, if the shutdown margin requirements are not met within an hour, an unusual event must be declared. In this case, the operators did not declare an unusual event for more than 12 hours, and only after the NRC inspector informed them of this requirement. The shutdown margin is a measure of the ability to turn off the nuclear chain reaction, and keep it off.

Northeast Nuclear Energy Company also was cited for failing to determine whether the shutdown margin requirement was satisfied within the required one hour after determining that a control assembly was immovable.

For these two alleged violations, the NRC staff has proposed

an \$87,500 fine.

In a letter to Northeast Nuclear Energy Company, Thomas T. Martin, Regional Administrator, NRC Region I, said these violations indicate weaknesses in licensed operators' and plant management's knowledge and understanding of emergency preparedness requirements. These violations also demonstrate weaknesses in the plant staff's ability to determine whether a control assembly is movable and determine shutdown margin with an immovable or untrippable control assembly. The latter issues were exacerbated by the lack of formal procedures for these activities.

In addition to the violations, Mr. Martin said, "the NRC is also concerned with deficiencies in the operators' knowledge of reactor theory and license requirements..."

The NRC staff also has cited, but not fined, Northeast Nuclear Energy Company for failing to evaluate the adequacy of the primary containment isolation function in Unit 1 in the event of a reactor water cleanup system (RWCU) line break since a 1987 modification. Plant technical specifications require that the RWCU system valves close to prevent the escape of water from the core in the event of an accident in which a pipe in the RWCU system ruptures. The NRC staff did not propose a fine for this alleged violation because it involved a problem that originated more than seven years ago, was not willful, was identified by the utility's staff, and because adequate corrective measures have been taken to address the cause of the deficiency.

Northeast Nuclear Energy Company has 30 days either to pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn. The utility also has 30 days to admit or deny the alleged violations, to describe the actions it has taken or plans to take to prevent recurrence, and to give the date by which it expects to be in full compliance with NRC requirements.

The State of Connecticut was informed of this enforcement action.

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