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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$112,500 FINE  
FOR APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT WATERFORD PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has informed Entergy Operations Inc. that it proposes to fine the utility \$112,500 for apparent violations of NRC requirements at Waterford Steam Electric Station, Unit 3, which is 20 miles west of New Orleans, Louisiana.

Entergy has 30 days to respond to the citation. During that time, it may pay the civil penalty or protest it. If a protest is denied, the company may ask for a hearing.

NRC is taking this action as the result of information gathered during a special inspection May 26-June 3 at the plant and received from Entergy during an enforcement conference held July 13 at the NRC Region IV office in Arlington, Texas. Both the inspection and enforcement conference concerned Entergy's discovery on May 3 (and notification to NRC) of electrical circuitry problems in several safety-related ventilation and filtration systems.

Since the enforcement conference, NRC has concluded that a design change implemented between October 1992 and April 1993 rendered three of these systems inoperable for periods longer than permitted by the plant's license. Those affected were systems which — in case of a severe accident — would filter radioactive material from air being removed from (1) the space between the containment building wall and an inner steel structure; (2) rooms containing emergency core cooling and containment heat removal systems; and (3) the fuel-handling building.

These systems were inoperable because the design change kept them from starting automatically after power was transferred from normal to emergency sources. Thus, had a radiological accident occurred and normal power been lost, operators would have had to go to the plant auxiliary building to restart the devices manually. In such a situation, the operators would have received higher radiation exposures and the potential would have been created for more severe off-site radiological consequences

because these filtering systems had been disabled. (The control room ventilation system also would have been similarly affected by the design change if an electrical relay had not drifted out of specification.)

NRC Regional Administrator L. Joe Callan told Entergy in a letter concerning the fine that NRC is concerned, not only about the inoperability of the systems and the design error which caused the condition, but also about the failure of plant personnel to discover and correct the problems despite "numerous opportunities" to do so. The civil penalty was increased from the base amount of \$50,000 to \$112,500 largely because of the multiple systems affected and Entergy's failure to pursue the cause of the problems during 1993 and early 1994.

After an Entergy system engineer recognized the problem in May of this year, the company promptly restored the systems to operability. It also has made a commitment to NRC that it will review other design changes from the plant's two past refueling outages to assure that other similar errors have not occurred. Entergy has further told the NRC of plans to evaluate design change procedures for adequacy and to incorporate into its training program lessons learned from these incidents.

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