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FOR IMMEDIATE

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NRC TO DISCUSS SOUTH TEXAS PROJECT
WORKER DISCRIMINATION CASES WITH RAYTHEON AND HL&P

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference with officials of Raytheon Co. and Houston Lighting & Power Co. to discuss apparent violations of NRC requirements barring discrimination against workers who raise safety concerns.

The conference will begin at 10 a.m. on Friday, July 19, at NRC Region IV offices in Arlington, Texas. HL&P operates the South Texas Project nuclear power plant near Bay City, Texas. Raytheon is a contractor to HL&P at South Texas Project. The meeting will be open to the public for observation; NRC officials will be available afterwards for questions.

The meeting is being held to discuss two apparent violations based on the results of U.S. Department of Labor proceedings. The first involves Thomas H. Smith, then an employee of Ebasco Services, Inc. (The Ebasco division with contracts at STP was bought by Raytheon). The Secretary of Labor ruled March 13 that Mr. Smith was subjected to a hostile work environment in 1991 in retaliation for raising concerns about scaffolding safety at the plant.

The second violation involves Earl V. Keene, an employee of Raytheon Engineers and Constructors. A Department of Labor administrative law judge ruled on Sept. 29, 1995, that Mr. Keene was subjected to discriminatory treatment in 1994 after he raised concerns about signing off for electrical maintenance work he did not perform.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that NRC has made a final determination that violations did occur or that enforcement action, such as a monetary fine, will be taken. The purpose is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance, and to provide HL&P and Raytheon an opportunity to present corrective

actions that have been taken.

No decision on the apparent violations or any enforcement action will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made later by senior NRC officials.

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