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NRC PROPOSES \$100,000 FINE AGAINST COMMONWEALTH EDISON  
FOR VIOLATION AT BRAIDWOOD NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$100,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for a testing error which left a potential leakage path from the Unit 2 reactor containment at the Braidwood Nuclear Power Station for a three-month period. The Braidwood Station, which is located in Braidwood, Illinois, has two reactors.

On November 15, 1994, plant personnel disconnected both sections of a hydrogen monitoring system in order to perform a routine test of the integrity of the Unit 2 reactor containment. The disconnections were made inside equipment cabinets.

Following the test a technician went to reconnect the hydrogen monitoring system. Because of an inadequate procedure, he looked only at the connections outside the cabinet and incorrectly decided the system had already been reconnected.

As a result, both parallel portions of the hydrogen monitoring system remained disconnected and, therefore, inoperable.

Later, a technician discovered that one section was disconnected and reconnected it without checking the parallel section or properly documenting the problem for further review.

(The hydrogen monitoring system would be used in the unlikely event of a major reactor accident to measure the concentration of hydrogen gas that might be present in the containment. Hydrogen in certain concentrations is potentially explosive.)

On February 3, the reconnected portion of the monitoring system was taken out of service for testing and possible repair. Since plant personnel did not realize the parallel portion was still disconnected, both portions of the system were then inoperable.

On February 15, a technician discovered the other portion of the system was disconnected. Both portions of the monitoring system were promptly restored to service.

The safety significance of the occurrence was that for an extended period of time the disconnected monitoring system could have provided a path for leakage of radioactive gases out of the containment in the event of a major reactor accident. The 1/4 inch piping is shut off during normal operations, but would be opened when the hydrogen monitoring system was actuated.

In notifying the company of the proposed fine, NRC Regional Administrator John B. Martin noted that the plant personnel involved lacked a questioning attitude and that they had missed opportunities to identify the problem earlier.

During the time the system was disconnected and inoperable, there were no releases of radioactivity through the system and there was no need for its hydrogen monitoring capability.

In addition to returning the monitoring system to service on February 15, the utility also checked all other systems to assure they were properly restored following the containment integrity test and revised its testing procedures for future tests.

Commonwealth Edison has until June 1 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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