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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$75,000 FINE AGAINST COMMONWEALTH EDISON  
FOR FAILING TO TAKE ADEQUATE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS AT LASALLE  
NUCLEAR STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$75,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for failing to take adequate and effective corrective actions for equipment problems at the LaSalle Nuclear Power Station. The LaSalle Station is a two-reactor facility located near Seneca, Illinois.

NRC inspections in November and December 1993 determined that the utility had not adequately dealt with problems involving lubrication of certain types of circuit breakers and with dampers designed to close off sections of the reactor building ventilation system.

In notifying the utility of the fine, NRC Regional Administrator John B. Martin stated: "The inspections at LaSalle Station identified that your corrective action and self-assessment programs have not been fully effective, resulting in unnecessary safety related and import-to-safety equipment problems."

He continued, "A general, plant-wide lack of a questioning attitude appears to exist which directly affects your ability to identify and resolve problems. Your past performance at times has focused on quick-fix solutions instead of long-term problem resolution."

The lubrication problem was identified by the circuit breaker manufacturer in 1989 when it recommended that the breakers be relubricated periodically. Subsequently, the utility's engineering consultant and the plant electrical maintenance department recommended that the breaker inspection and maintenance procedure be revised.

In October 1992 a circuit breaker for a reactor recirculation pump failed to open during routine testing because the lubricant had hardened.

At the time of the NRC inspection in November 1993, however, the utility had not yet inspected a sample of the circuit breakers at the plant to determine if a lubrication problem existed and had not revised its inspection procedure to incorporate the manufacturer's recommendations.

After the issue was identified by the NRC, the utility performed an operability evaluation and developed a program to refurbish the circuit breakers.

In the ventilation system damper problem, the NRC had cited the company for failing to take corrective action on damper failures in 1989 and since that time there have been numerous failures of dampers to perform properly during testing.

The dampers are required to close under certain accident conditions to prevent release of radioactive material in the ventilation system. While the dampers have failed to function during testing, there have been no incidents requiring their use to prevent a release of radioactivity.

In January 1994 the utility began an evaluation to determine the cause of the damper failures. That evaluation is continuing.

Commonwealth Edison has until May 4, 1994, 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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