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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Friday, May 12, 1995)

NRC STAFF AUTHORIZES LOADING OF DRY CASK SPENT FUEL STORAGE SYSTEM AT PRAIRIE ISLAND NUCLEAR POWER STATION IN MINNESOTA

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has authorized Northern States Power Company to load spent reactor fuel in the first cask of the dry cask storage system at the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Station in Red Wing, Minnesota.

The company was granted a partial waiver of the 30-day waiting period, specified in NRC regulations, following completion of the preoperational testing program for the cask system. The NRC staff determined that all pending issues for use of the cask had been satisfactorily resolved.

Northern States Power Co. submitted the report of the preoperational testing program on April 20. The partial waiver permits the utility to begin loading the cask immediately.

The NRC conducted a special team inspection at the Prairie Island site beginning April 17, and a meeting to discuss the inspection results with the utility was held April 28 in Red Wing.

The issues identified in that meeting have since been resolved:

1. The utility's procedure for unloading the cask, should that become necessary, has been completed. The NRC staff has reviewed the procedure and found it to be accceptable.

2. Remaining issues on several welds in the cask and the pressure testing of the cask have been resolved.

3. The temperature and pressure monitoring equipment which would be used during a cask unloading has been fabricated and tested.

4. The utility can meet the retrievability requirement of the NRC regulations because there would be sufficient space in the spent fuel pool at the plant to unload a cask should it be necessary. There are storage locations in the spent fuel pool which currently hold non-fuel items, and these locations could be emptied to provide space for additonal fuel assemblies if necessary. The items would be stored temporarily elsewhere in the pool.

NRC inspectors will monitor the loading and movement of the initial cask. Once loaded, the cask will be moved to a concrete storage pad at the plant site.

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