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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST WPPSS  
FOR APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT NUCLEAR POWER PLANT NEAR HANFORD

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed fining Washington Public Power Supply System \$50,000 for allegedly operating its WNP-2 nuclear power plant near Hanford, Wash., in violation of NRC requirements for the control room emergency ventilation system.

These alleged violations of NRC requirements, classified as Severity Level III, were identified during an inspection conducted by the NRC January 23 through February 15 and discussed with WPPSS officials in an open enforcement conference held in Arlington, Tex., on April 7. The alleged violations occurred between March and November, 1994, and were reported by the licensee. The \$50,000 fine is the base level penalty for a Severity Level III violation. The most serious violations are classified as Severity Level I.

The first alleged violation occurred when the ventilation system was rendered inoperable by the inadvertent wetting of the charcoal filters. This happened during shutdown operations while irradiated fuel was being handled in the secondary containment.

The second alleged violation occurred when a missing door gasket in a component caused the ventilation system to be inoperable while the plant was operating. The third alleged violation took place when open holes through the control room boundary caused both trains of the ventilation system to be inoperable during normal plant operations.

L. Joe Callan, NRC Region IV administrator, said in a letter to J.V. Parrish, vice president of nuclear operations at WPPSS: "The violations were found to be safety significant because they represent a breakdown in the control of licensed activities associated with the control room emergency filtration system. . . . The decision to classify the violations as a Severity Level III problem also reflects, in part, the NRC's regulatory concern raised by the fact that you had ample opportunities to identify and correct the problems in each event before they resulted in [technical specification] violations."

Callan also noted that WPPSS has taken steps to correct conditions that led to the alleged violations, including upgrading training for control room operators and maintenance personnel, increasing the formality of troubleshooting procedures, and hiring an outside contractor to perform a root cause analysis of these events.

WPPSS is required to respond to the "Notice of Violation and Proposed Imposition of Civil Penalty" within 30 days, including in the response an admission or denial of the alleged violations, reasons for the violations if admitted or reasons denied, corrective action taken, steps taken to avoid future violations, and the date when full compliance will be achieved.

Within the same 30 days, WPPSS may pay the civil penalty or protest. If a protest is denied, the utility may ask for a hearing.

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