

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region I
475 Allendale Road King of Prussia, PA 19401
Phone: 610/337-5330 Fax: 610/337-5241
Internet: dps@nrc.gov or nas@nrc.gov

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Contact: Diane Screnci
Neil A. Sheehan

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC, NIAGARA MOHAWK POWER COMPANY OFFICIALS
TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with officials of the Niagara Mohawk Power Company tomorrow (February 25) to discuss apparent violations of agency requirements at the Nine Mile Point nuclear power plant. The predecisional enforcement conference will get under way at 9 a.m. in the public meeting room at the NRC's Region I office in King of Prussia, Pa. It will be open to the public for observation only.

Among the apparent violations found by the NRC during recent inspections at the plant, which is located in Scriba, N.Y., are:

- Inadequate corrective actions regarding debris in the Unit 2 suppression pool and downcomers. In the event of loss-of-coolant accident at the plant, the suppression pool, at the base of the reactor containment building, would be needed to provide cooling water to the reactor. Foreign materials in this pool and in the dozens of downcomers, or pipes, leading to it could have interfered with the flow of this water. The NRC has determined the suppression pool was not adequately cleaned during a previous refueling outage.

- Ineffective corrective actions that contributed to a Unit 1 reactor overfill event on November 5, in which a leaking feedwater regulating valve was putting too much water into the vessel. A discrepancy with the level instrument resulted in the water flowing into the main steam lines.

- Numerous examples of weak technical performance and failure to assure quality in engineering activities.

- Invalid design input used in motor-operated valve calculations. As a result, the NRC questioned the ability of four risk-significant valves, in the high-pressure core spray, reactor core isolation cooling and residual heat removal-containment spray systems, to open under certain accident conditions.

- Programmatic deficiencies in implementing the NRC's maintenance rule for nuclear power plants.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that the NRC has determined that violations have occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensees with an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in NRC inspection reports regarding the plant; and to enable the licensee to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later time.