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NRC STAFF, ENTERGY OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS  
APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT ARKANSAS NUCLEAR ONE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference this week with officials of Entergy Operations, Inc. to discuss apparent violations of NRC requirements at Arkansas Nuclear One near Russellville, Arkansas.

The conference will begin at noon on Friday, September 26, at the NRC Region IV office in Arlington, Texas. The meeting will be open to the public for observation; NRC officials will be available afterwards for questions.

During an inspection conducted May 27 through June 30 of this year, NRC inspectors found three apparent violations of regulations involving maintenance of steam generator tubes.

Steam generator tubes have been a problem in some nuclear power plants because they have tended to crack in the high-temperature and high-pressure environment in which they operate. Water heated by a nuclear plant's uranium fuel passes through the steam generator tubes, where the heat is transferred to a second water system that boils and creates steam to drive the plant's turbine. At each outage, tubes are inspected using magnetic instruments to locate flaws that could be precursors to a crack. When the flaws identified are of a certain size, the tubes must be removed from service by plugging, or reinforced using sleeves inserted into the ends of the tubes.

The first apparent violation pertains to the failure of ANO to use a method that conformed to requirements in estimating the size of flaws in steam generator tubes during a 1996 outage in Unit 1. The method used was found to have underestimated the size of the flaws after tubes removed from the steam generator were tested following the outage. As a result, some tubes that potentially contained flaws that technical specifications require to be plugged were left in service.

In the second apparent violation, it was found that some ANO Unit 2 steam generator tubes requiring plugging according to technical specifications were left in service after the 1996 outage until the May 1997 outage. In this instance, data from the

1996 outage had indicated tubes that needed to be plugged, but this fact had not been identified during the original data analysis in 1996.

The third apparent violation involves a failure to take corrective action for welds on reinforcing sleeves in steam generator tubes in Unit 2 when test data indicated potential flaws during a 1995 outage.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that NRC has made a final determination that a violation did occur or that enforcement action will be taken. The purpose is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance, and to provide Entergy an opportunity to challenge or correct portions of the NRC inspection report and address corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any enforcement action will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made later by senior NRC officials.

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