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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC STAFF TO HOLD PREDECISIONAL ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE
ON INSPECTION FINDINGS AT POINT BEACH NUCLEAR POWER STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet September 12 with representatives of Wisconsin Electric Power Co. for a predecisional enforcement conference on several regulatory issues at the Point Beach Nuclear Power Station.

Among the issues to be discussed are possible violations associated with a May 28 incident in which hydrogen ignited during welding on a spent fuel storage cask at the plant.

The meeting, which is open to public observation, will be in the Main Conference Room (Third Floor) of the NRC's Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois. The meeting will be held in two segments, one beginning at 10 a.m. There will be a lunch break at approximately 12 noon with the second segment following the break.

The 10 a.m. segment will cover possible violations associated with the May 28 spent fuel cask incident at Point Beach and the utility's response to it.

Welding on a shield lid for a loaded spent fuel storage cask ignited hydrogen gas which had accumulated under the lid. There was no apparent damage to the cask or the spent fuel, and there were no injuries. The hydrogen was generated by an unexpected chemical reaction between a zinc coating inside the cask and boric acid in the water surrounding the fuel in the cask.

The segment following the lunch break will cover possible violations associated with four unrelated issues which were identified in NRC inspections:

1. Viewing of training video tapes by reactor operators while on duty in the plant's control room.

2. The adequacy of a safety review by the utility of the minimum number of pumps required to be operable in the plant's service water system which supplies cooling water to various plant equipment. There are six pumps in the system. The existing requirement called for a minimum of two pumps, and the utility did not take adequate steps to increase the minimum when it determined that three would be needed in some accident

conditions to provide adequate cooling for the reactor containment.

3. Starting up Point Beach Unit 2 in April with a safety system -- an auxiliary feedwater pump -- inoperable. The pump provides water to the plant's steam generators when the main feedwater pumps are not available. A valve had been left closed following maintenance, and the utility did not conduct a required post-maintenance test which would have found that the valve remained closed.

4. The adequacy of testing of safety injection pumps which are part of the emergency core cooling system at the plant. The pumps are periodically tested to assure that they provide the necessary cooling water flow. During testing in 1995 and early 1996 the utility determined that the pumps provided the necessary flow even though the test results showed lower flow rates. The reduced flow measurements were attributed to inaccurate measuring devices. The devices were recalibrated, and a correction factor was applied to the flow measurements to bring them to the required level. However, the pumps were not tested with the recalibrated instruments to verify they met the flow requirement.

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

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a fine, will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later time.

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A listing of NRC staff meetings with licensees and other organization which are open to the public is available through a computer online system (1-800/952-9676), the Fedworld online system (1-800/303-9672), and the NRC's web site <<http://www.nrc.gov>>. A recorded listing of meetings may be heard by calling 1-800/952-9674.