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No. 96-113

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(Wednesday, August 14, 1996)

NRC ISSUES ORDER REQUIRING INDEPENDENT  
ASSESSMENT OF MILLSTONE CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued an immediately effective confirmatory order that requires Northeast Nuclear Energy Company to contract for an independent assessment of the results of programs aimed at resolving existing design and management deficiencies at the three Millstone nuclear power plants in Connecticut.

The licensee has agreed to obtain the services of highly qualified and independent engineers who will independently verify the results of the corrective action programs at the plants, currently shut down. NRC must approve the team's qualifications and independence of the licensee. The team's findings will be provided concurrently to the NRC and the licensee.

The order further requires that the independent assessment plan must include:

--An in-depth review of selected plant systems since initial licensing.

--Risk and safety based criteria for selecting the systems.

--An audit plan to ensure that the quality of results of problem identification and corrective action programs of selected systems is representative of plant systems overall.

--Procedures for reporting findings concurrently to the licensee and the NRC and for commenting on the licensee's resolution of team recommendations.

An NRC headquarters team lead by a senior executive will oversee the independent verification team's work and will conduct its own inspection and review of the licensee's corrective actions and their implementation.

The licensee is required to provide progress reports on its implementation of the independent verification team's

recommendations to the NRC's Regional Administrator in Region I, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania, and the Director of the Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, at NRC headquarters in Rockville, Maryland.

Millstone Unit 1 was shut down last November for refueling. Unit 2 was taken out of service in February due to a safety injection system being declared inoperable. Unit 3 was shut down in March after the licensee determined that containment isolation valves for a feedwater pump were also declared inoperable.

NRC inspections have identified significant failures to comply with the conditions of licenses, NRC regulations and the plants' updated Final Safety Analysis Reports. The NRC issued letters requiring the licensee to provide, before restart, information to assure the plants will be operated safely and in accordance with all regulatory and license conditions. In addition, the Commissioners will have to approve restart before the plants can resume operation.

Any person adversely affected by the confirmatory order, other than the licensee, may request a hearing within 20 days of its issuance. The request should be submitted to the Secretary, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Attention: Chief, Docketing and Service Section, Washington, D.C. 20555.

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Editors: The text of the confirmatory order has been posted on the Internet at this address: <http://www.gov/OPA/reports>.