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FOR IMMEDIATE

NRC, PG&E OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS
APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT DIABLO CANYON PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference next week with officials of the Pacific Gas & Electric Co. to discuss two apparent violations concerning main steam safety valves at the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant.

The conference will be at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, July 1, at the NRC Region IV office in Arlington, Texas. PG&E operates the twin-reactor Diablo Canyon plant at Avila Beach, Calif. The meeting will be open to the public for observation; NRC officials will be available afterwards for questions.

An NRC inspection conducted in May found an apparent violation in PG&E's failure to promptly identify and correct improper setpoints on some main steam safety valves in Unit 1. The inspection also found a second apparent violation in PG&E's failure to follow required procedures in promptly documenting an evaluation of the results of tests it conducted on the safety valves.

Main steam safety valves are among several features in the non-nuclear secondary system designed to relieve pressure that could build up

in the steam generator system under certain conditions. Steam generators are large heat exchangers in which hot, high-pressure water from the nuclear reactor creates non-radioactive steam that spins turbines connected to electrical generators. Each reactor has four steam generators. Each steam generator system has five safety valves, for a total of 20 per power plant.

PG&E's testing of the safety valves showed that some of the 20 failed to open as designed at specified pressures, and instead initially opened at pressures slightly higher than specified. The deviation from limits was slight and other systems could be used if needed to relieve steam pressure on the non-nuclear secondary side of the plant.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that NRC has made a final determination that violations did occur or that enforcement action, such as a monetary fine, will be taken. The purpose is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide PG&E an opportunity to challenge or correct portions of the inspection report; and for the licensee to outline its 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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