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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$75,000 FINE AGAINST COMMONWEALTH EDISON CO.
FOR FAILING TO CORRECT SWITCH PROBLEMS AT DRESDEN STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$75,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for failing to adequately correct problems with reactor water level indicator switches at the Dresden Nuclear Power Station. The Dresden Station is located near Morris, Illinois.

An NRC inspection in January-February 1994 determined that water level indicator switches had failed to actuate or were found to be out of tolerance at least 50 times between 1991 and 1994. The utility had not taken adequate measures to identify the cause of the switch failures, and plant engineering personnel were not aware of the extent of the switch failures.

The water level indicators are one of the systems used to actuate emergency core cooling systems automatically if the water level in the reactor drops to a certain point. None of the instances of switch failure resulted in significant safety problems at the Dresden station. Other indicators would have been available to actuate the safety systems had they been needed.

"The violation is considered a significant breakdown in the control of the Dresden corrective action program," stated NRC Regional Administrator John A. Martin in notifying the utility of the fine. "It is indicative of a lack of meaningful and continuous management involvement in the resolution of significant issues."

Subsequently, the utility took corrective action to assure that the switches were operable and is planning to use other existing reactor water level instruments to perform that same function as the switches.

Commonwealth Edison has until June 16, 1994, to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the utility may request a hearing.