

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

RIV: 96-52
CONTACT: Breck Henderson
OFFICE: 817/860-8128
PAGER: (800) 443-7243 (065477)

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NRC PROPOSES TO FINE ARKANSAS NUCLEAR ONE \$50,000
FOR VIOLATION OF MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has informed Entergy Operations, Inc., the operator of Arkansas Nuclear One (ANO) near Russellville, Ark., that it has proposed a \$50,000 fine against the company for violating NRC maintenance requirements at ANO Unit 1.

The problem occurred when ANO Unit 1 reactor automatically shut down May 19 and one main steam safety valve failed to close, causing one of the plant's two steam generators to boil dry. NRC inspectors determined that faulty maintenance performed on the main steam safety valve caused the malfunction.

No radiation was released from the plant, but the dry steam generator complicated recovery from the reactor shutdown and plant conditions caused operators to declare a Notice of Unusual Event, the NRC's lowest level of emergency response. NRC inspectors noted that operators at ANO Unit 1 responded well to the event and the challenges it created.

The NRC sent an augmented inspection team to ANO May 22-24 and conducted further inspections July 12 to August 2. An enforcement conference was held August 26 at which Entergy and NRC officials discussed circumstances surrounding the apparent violation.

Information from the inspections and the conference led the NRC to conclude that the main steam safety valve, which is designed to open to protect the steam generator from overpressure when the reactor is shut down from full power, failed to close because a cotter pin that should have held a nut in a manual lifting device in place had not been properly engaged following maintenance on the valve. The unpinned nut had worked its way into a position that caused the valve to jam open.

Further inspections found that cotter pins on at least two other main steam safety valves were not fully engaged, and that there was a potential for both steam generators to have been affected. This could have presented a more difficult challenge to plant operators to safely cool the reactor after the automatic shutdown.

NRC Regional Administrator L. Joe Callan, in a letter to Entergy Vice President J.W. Yelverton, said the Severity Level III violation and civil penalty are being imposed "[T]o emphasize the importance of proper maintenance on safety-related components, including the need to identify problems encountered during the performance of such maintenance."

Entergy has 30 days to respond to the NRC's Notice of Violation. During this time it may pay the civil penalty or protest it. If the protest is denied the company may ask for a hearing.

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