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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$100,000 FINE AGAINST COMMONWEALTH EDISON COMPANY
FOR VIOLATIONS OF NRC REQUIREMENTS AT BYRON PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$100,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for engineering and maintenance violations at the Byron Nuclear Power Station. The facility is near Byron, Illinois.

The utility was cited for failing to appropriately use design information to test and operate a cooling water system for safety-related equipment and for failing for three years to correct maintenance problems regarding that system.

Since 1993, silt accumulation problems and degraded trash racks in the basins beneath the plant's mechanical draft cooling towers had been routinely identified by plant staff and had been the subject of maintenance work orders. However, no maintenance work was done and no corrective action was taken by the utility when silt accumulations in the basins exceeded the plant's license limits.

Excessive silt levels in the basins could prevent proper operation of a system used to cool safety equipment which may be used during certain emergency conditions. Trash racks prevent debris from being sucked into the system.

NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach said, in notifying Commonwealth Edison of the fine: "Exacerbating our concern regarding these issues was that NRC intervention was necessary to identify the scope and magnitude of the problems and that Byron staff was ineffective for an extended period of time at evaluating identified deficiencies."

The utility has until March 29 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.

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