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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$100,000 FINE
FOR APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT WNP-2

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has informed the Washington Public Power Supply System that it proposes to fine the utility \$100,000 for five apparent violations of NRC requirements at the Washington Nuclear Project-2 (WNP-2), near Richland, Washington.

The violations were identified during a special NRC inspection conducted from late June through early September. They occurred on various dates in June as the plant returned to power generation after a refueling outage.

One violation was cited because plant personnel advanced through a series of defined steps in the restart process while one train of the control room emergency filtration system was inoperable, contrary to requirements. The reactor systems were warming up at the time, but the plant was not generating power. The filtration system is designed to protect control room personnel from radiation under accident conditions.

Three other violations were noted in the Supply System's failure to conduct required tests on certain equipment during the restart process. A fifth violation was found in the Supply System's failure to have an adequate procedure in place to test certain valves prior to the restart.

'Although the violations did not result in actual safety consequences, the NRC considers the regulatory significance of the violations high,' L. Joe Callan, Regional Administrator of NRC Region IV in Arlington, Texas, said in a letter to the Supply System.

'Taken collectively, the violations indicate that the Supply System did not maintain an effective program for assuring that required operational checks of equipment were performed at the appropriate times and in accordance with technical specifications,' Mr. Callan said. 'The number of violations, and the fact that they occurred over a relatively short period of time, suggest a serious weakness in this very fundamental and important area.'

Mr. Callan noted that the Supply System took corrective actions that the NRC considered prompt and comprehensive. "We believe it is important to note that the Supply System identified most of the current violations, and important to recognize that this is, in and of itself, a sign of improved performance on the part of the Supply System," he said.

The fact that violations with similar causes were noted in August 1995, when the NRC fined the Supply System \$50,000, remains a significant concern, Mr. Callan said.

The NRC has categorized the violations as Severity Level III. The agency's enforcement system uses four Severity Levels, with Level I being the most serious. The apparent violations were discussed by NRC and Supply System officials at a predecisional enforcement conference on October 22 in Arlington, Texas.

The Supply System has 30 days to respond to the NRC's citation, during which time it may pay the civil penalty or protest it. If the protest is denied, the utility may ask for a hearing.

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