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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST COMMONWEALTH EDISON
FOR INADEQUATE DESIGN AND MAINTENANCE CONTROLS AT QUAD CITIES

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$50,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Company for inadequate evaluation and repairs of the interior and exterior siding of the reactor building at the Quad Cities Nuclear Power Station. The two-reactor plant is located at Cordova, Illinois.

On May 10 of last year the corrugated steel siding on the exterior and interior of the reactor building was damaged by high winds. The interior siding was promptly repaired, but the utility deferred repairs to the exterior siding, believing that it filled only a cosmetic function.

An NRC inspection team, however, concluded that both the interior and exterior siding are needed for the reactor building to fill its design function of containing radioactive releases in the unlikely event of a reactor accident.

The primary reactor containment, a steel structure inside the reactor building, is the primary structure to contain possible radioactive releases from reactor systems, but the reactor building functions as a secondary containment. The siding also includes "blow out" panels that are designed to relieve pressure inside the reactor building should there be a steam release that could potentially damage the building's structure.

The NRC inspectors cited the utility for three violations associated with the maintenance and assessment of the siding:

1. Attaching pipe supports to the building siding blowout panels without determining the effect of the attachments on the ability of the panels to relieve pressure inside the building.
2. Failing to recognize that damaged bolts connecting the blow out panels would result in the panels being released as lower pressures than intended and, therefore, not limiting the release of radioactive material to the environment under certain accident conditions.

3. Failing to adequately evaluate and replace the damaged exterior reactor building siding.

In notifying the utility of the proposed fine, NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach said, "These violations are significant because your staff did not fully understand the functional design of the interior and exterior reactor building siding. In addition, your staff failed to translate the design into surveillance tests to ensure the structure remained operable."

The violations were discussed with the utility in a predecisional enforcement conference with the NRC staff on February 27.

The utility was issued a Notice of Violation for a second issue which was discussed in the conference, but no fine was proposed. Commonwealth Edison was cited for failing to adequately test the emergency control room ventilation system following modification in 1985. Recent testing and evaluation determined that while the ventilation system would not meet its design criteria, it still would provide necessary protection for the control room staff in the event of an accident.

Commonwealth Edison has until July 24 to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and the NRC staff formally imposes the fine, the utility can request a hearing.

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