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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC PROPOSES \$200,000 FINE AGAINST NIAGARA MOHAWK
FOR QUALITY, DESIGN CONTROL WEAKNESSES AT NINE MILE POINT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$200,000 fine against Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation for alleged violations of agency requirements at the Nine Mile Point (NMP) Units 1 and 2 nuclear power plants in Oswego, N.Y. Identified during NRC inspections conducted between October 7 and November 30, 1996, the violations fall into two main areas: the failure to identify and/or correct several adverse quality conditions, and the failure to maintain appropriate design controls.

A number of the deficiencies were identified because of the following circumstances:

- At Unit 1, in November 1996, a failure to control reactor water level after an automatic shutdown resulted in the inadvertent overflow of the reactor vessel and the introduction of water into the main steam lines.
- At Unit 2, during the spring 1995 refueling outage, a failure to properly clean the suppression pool led to a failure to identify debris in the drywell-to-suppression pool downcomers. Debris in the downcomers, or pipes connecting the drywell to the suppression pool, could have impacted the functioning of various safety equipment.
- Inadequate justification for use of a certain design input in calculations used to estimate the ability of four Unit 2 motor-operated valves to operate under certain conditions.
- Inadequate evaluations and corrective actions to maintain the Unit 2 reactor core isolation cooling system.
- An incorrect setpoint for the Unit 2 control room chiller condenser water low flow trip.

"With respect to the corrective action violations, the overflow event at Unit 1 is particularly disturbing," Region I Administrator Hubert J. Miller wrote in a letter to Niagara Mohawk. Previously, Mr. Miller said, Nine Mile Point did not adequately respond to industry information to ensure the combination of training, procedures and system design was

adequate to prevent such an event.

The event raises concerns about operator knowledge of some fundamental aspects of plant design and operating procedures, he said.

Regarding the other corrective action violations, the administrator wrote that "failure to promptly identify and correct conditions which could degrade safety equipment also represents a significant regulatory concern."

Mr. Miller, addressing the design control violations, said, "Lack of rigor in technical evaluations, personnel errors, and lack of management oversight and verification led to questionable design decisions on safety-related MOVs (motor-operated valves), longstanding deficient conditions and incorrect equipment modifications."

Niagara Mohawk has 30 days either to pay the proposed fine or request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn.

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