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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NRC STAFF PROPOSES TO FINE RG&E \$100,000 FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
AT GINNA NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has proposed a \$100,000 fine against the operator of the Robert E. Ginna nuclear power plant for two alleged violations involving safety valves at the Ontario, N.Y., facility.

The first alleged violation facing Rochester Gas & Electric (RG&E) Corporation stems from a failure to adequately verify the ability of the plant's two residual heat removal system core deluge valves to open when necessary. Located in the plant's containment structure in two parallel lines that discharge into the reactor vessel, the valves, upon receipt of a safety signal, would need to open and allow the injection of water from the residual heat removal system into the vessel. They also serve a pressure isolation function for the vessel. Failure of these valves to operate properly would significantly degrade the ability of the emergency core cooling system to perform as required during an accident.

RG&E's failure to adequately correct the condition despite past opportunities to do so constituted the second alleged violation.

Since the discovery of the alleged violations, during special NRC inspections conducted last July and August, the utility has modified the valves to assure they perform as intended. Also, RG&E conducted significant additional testing and re-analyses of the valves and concluded they were, in fact, operable prior to modifications in August 1996.

NRC Region 1 Administrator Hubert J. Miller expressed concern that RG&E had not performed adequate analysis and verification of the valves' capabilities prior to August 1996, despite indications that further analysis was warranted. Mr. Miller also said that given the regulatory significance and duration of the infractions, as well as the impact on plant safety if the valves had not functioned as needed, they have been categorized as a Severity Level III problem that warrants a civil penalty.

"These findings demonstrate the importance of management taking appropriate action to assure that 1.) design inputs for safety-related components are adequately analyzed, and appropriately verified; and 2.) indications of adverse conditions, including inadequate analysis, are promptly identified and corrected," Mr. Miller wrote in a letter to RG&E.

The utility has 30 days to pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that part or all of the penalty be withdrawn.

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