

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, IL 60532-4351

NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT: RIII-97-55
CONTACT: Jan Strasma 630/829-9663
Angela Dauginas 630/829-9662
E-mail: opa3@nrc.gov

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NRC STAFF PROPOSED \$450,000 FINE AGAINST ILLINOIS POWER CO.
FOR VIOLATIONS AT CLINTON NUCLEAR POWER STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$450,000 fine against Illinois Power Company for violations of NRC safety requirements at the Clinton Nuclear Power Station. The Clinton plant is located near Clinton, Illinois.

The violations were identified in an NRC inspection associated with a September 5 incident when the plant was shut down to repair a pump seal leak and in four other other inspections performed at the Clinton plant. The violations were discussed with the utility in predecisional enforcement conferences, open to the public, on February 4, March 4, and March 20.

The Clinton plant has remained shut down since September 5 while the utility takes steps to improve management and staff performance.

In notifying the utility of the proposed fine NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach stated, "The violations demonstrate a lack of conservative decision-making, pervasive procedural adherence problems, inappropriate procedures, and a lack of rigor in conducting routine plant activities."

Two significant procedure violations occurred September 5 as plant operators sought to reduce a leak from a recirculation pump seal in order to allow continued plant operation. The procedure violations directly resulted in the seal leakage exceeding the NRC license limit and requiring a plant shutdown.

Beach said the plant management inappropriately emphasized trying to shut off the leaking pump in order to continue plant operation with the second recirculation pump in the system. "This resulted in a focus to operate the plant rather than the more conservative decision to shut down the unit," he added.

The NRC staff concluded, based on the findings of the NRC Office of Investigations, NRC inspections, and enforcement conferences, that the utility's actions demonstrated "careless disregard" for the procedural requirements.

A \$200,000 fine has been proposed for the two violations associated with the September 5 pump seal leak and shutdown.

The other violations for which Illinois Power has been cited include:

-- Seventeen instances of failure to follow operations and radiation protection procedures in various incidents. (\$100,000 fine proposed).

-- Two violations associated with an Emergency Diesel Generator in which the design requirements were not properly transferred to the procedure used in calibrating a relay in the system. As a result, the diesel generator would not have operated as intended between September 1996 and September of last year. (\$50,000 fine proposed)

-- Seven violations involving the failure to perform safety evaluations to determine if changes in plant conditions or activities continued to meet the original design and safety review of the plant. (\$50,000 fine proposed)

-- Two violations associated with inadequate corrective actions to assure that valves in the feedwater system would close properly to prevent the flow of water or steam out of the reactor containment if necessary. (\$50,000 fine proposed)

Beach noted, "But for the extended shutdown of the Clinton Power Station and the substantial corrective actions taken during this shutdown period to improve performance, a larger civil penalty would have been proposed."

Illinois Power Company has until July 9 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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Note: The 26-page enforcement letter and Notice of Violation is available from the Region III Office of Public Affairs and on the NRC web site at: <http://www.nrc.gov/OPA/reports>