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NRC, PECO ENERGY TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT LIMERICK PLANT

Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with representatives of PECO Energy Company on Wednesday, June 10, to discuss several apparent violations of agency requirements involving equipment operability at the Limerick nuclear power plant. PECO owns and operates the twin-reactor facility, which is located in the Philadelphia suburb of Limerick, Pa.

The predecisional enforcement conference is scheduled to begin at 1 p.m. in the Public Meeting Room at the NRC Region I office in King of Prussia, Pa. It will be open to the public for observation.

One of the apparent violations pertains to a failure to verify the proper installation of a bearing in one of the plant's emergency diesel generators. Limerick has eight emergency diesel generators -- four for each reactor. They would be used to provide electricity to key safety systems in the event that off-site power was lost. After a failure of one of the generators last October, PECO determined that the most likely cause was a combination of internal forces and the improper installation of a bearing during the engine's last overhaul.

Another apparent violation stems from a failure to effectively troubleshoot a problem affecting a Unit 2 residual heat removal system valve. One function of the residual heat removal system is to maintain water level in the reactor vessel following a loss-of-coolant accident. Part of that system is a minimum flow valve, which is designed to open when a residual heat removal pump is in operation with the system's flow at low levels in order to prevent pump damage. However, between Sept. 1, 1997, and Jan. 21 of this year, PECO efforts to prevent recurrent unplanned closures of the valve were ineffective.

Lastly, an NRC inspector found that PECO did not aggressively and comprehensively fix another Unit 2 valve that was experiencing difficulties. An exhaust valve on the high pressure coolant injection system, one of the plant's emergency core cooling systems, failed to stroke open during testing. Despite efforts to fix the problem, ineffective corrective action led to the valve being inoperable for an extended period of

time.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that the NRC has determined a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee with an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the licensee to outline its proposed corrective action.

No decision on the apparent violations will be made at this conference. That decision will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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