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NRC STAFF SETS ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE WITH DUKE ENERGY CORPORATION TO DISCUSS REGULATORY CONCERNS AT OCONEE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a predecisional enforcement conference with Duke Energy Corporation in Atlanta on June 22 to discuss regulatory concerns associated with the Oconee Nuclear Station's borated water storage tanks and reactor building emergency sumps on all three units.

In certain accident situations involving a large leak from the reactor coolant system, water would be drawn from the borated water storage tanks by pumps feeding into the system. The leaking water would be collected in a sump, or low drainage area, in the bottom of the reactor building. When the water in the storage tank fell below a certain level, the plant's procedures would tell operators to switch over to the water collected in the sump. Miscalculations of the tanks' level instruments and uncertainties in the sumps' level instruments were identified and corrected by Duke employees in late 1997, but could have led to problems in certain accident situations before corrective actions were taken. An NRC inspection in May identified two apparent violations as a result of these concerns which will be discussed at the enforcement conference.

The conference will be held at 10:30 a.m. in the NRC Region II office in Atlanta, located on the 24th floor of the Atlanta Federal Center, 61 Forsyth Street, S. W. The meeting is open to observation by members of the public, and NRC officials will be available at its conclusion to answer questions from interested observers.

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

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a civil penalty, will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made by NRC officials at a later time.

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