

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region II
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**NRC STAFF PROPOSES TO FINE FPL \$88,000
FOR VIOLATIONS AT THE ST. LUCIE NUCLEAR POWER PLANT**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$88,000 civil penalty against Florida Power & Light Company for two violations of NRC requirements relating to calibration errors on St. Lucie nuclear plant's Unit 1 refueling water tank level instruments which could have resulted in damage to Emergency Core Cooling System pumps during certain postulated accident conditions.

Company personnel identified the problem and reported it to the NRC. Calculations which indicated a water level setpoint change to initiate automatic transfer of suction from the tank to the containment sump during certain postulated loss of coolant accidents were not properly incorporated into a procedure. This could have resulted in a condition which could delay a switch in suction and cause possible damage to ECCS pumps.

The first violation was that FPL failed to translate the new setpoint for the tank level into the proper procedures. The second violation is the lack of reasonable assurance that the ECCS systems could perform their safety functions in all accident scenarios because of the setpoint error. The NRC staff has proposed an \$88,000 civil penalty for the two violations together. The violations have been categorized in the aggregate as a Severity Level II problem on the NRC Enforcement Policy scale where Level I is the most severe and Level IV the least.

In a letter to FPL, Region II Administrator Luis Reyes said that while the incorrect setpoint did not have actual safety consequences, "this issue has significant potential safety consequences." Reyes said the issue was "identified because of a critical, questioning attitude by operations and engineering personnel" at the plant. In addition, Reyes' letter points out that the plant staff's corrective actions were "comprehensive" including checking other setpoints, revising engineering instructions and a re-emphasis of management expectations on design transmittal requirements.

Normally, a civil penalty would not have been proposed in light of FPL's identification and corrective action. However, a civil penalty was proposed to emphasize the importance of effective engineering activities and associated quality assurance commensurate with the core damage risk. Reyes said "the violations resulted in a significant increase in risk," and "if not for the questioning attitudes displayed by your staff," a larger civil penalty would have been proposed.

The company has 30 days from receipt of the Notice of Violation to either pay the fine or protest its imposition.

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