

The potential safety consequences of these violations were low. The venting is performed to make sure no gases accumulate that could affect the functioning of the systems. The system design, however, minimizes the possibility that this would occur. The piping was also tested after the issue was identified by the NRC at the two sites, and the tests confirmed that no gases had accumulated at the high points.

"While the potential safety consequences of these violations are low, the regulatory significance is high," said A. Bill Beach, NRC Regional Administrator, in notifying the utility of the fines.

"NRC involvement was necessary in order to ensure strict compliance with the [license] requirements and the necessary [license] changes were made," he added.

The NRC staff has subsequently granted license amendments for Braidwood Unit 2 and Byron Unit 2. Braidwood Unit 1 and Byron Unit 1 were granted temporary relief from their license requirements to vent the valves and piping, pending review of license amendment requests.

Commonwealth Edison has until November 3 to pay the fines or to protest them. If the fines are protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the utility may request a hearing.

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