

UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, REGION IV
611 Ryan Plaza Drive - Suite 400
Arlington, Texas 76011-8064

RIV: 97-29
CONTACT: Breck Henderson
OFFICE: 817/860-8128
PAGER: (800) 443-7243 (065477)

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NRC PROPOSES TO FINE ENTERGY \$55,000
FOR VIOLATIONS AT WATERFORD 3 NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a civil penalty of \$55,000 against Entergy Operations, Inc., operator of Waterford Steam Electric Station, Unit 3, a nuclear power plant near Taft, La., for violations of NRC requirements in the design, testing and operation of the plant's containment cooling system.

The violations were identified during inspections conducted February 3-28, and were the subject of a predecisional enforcement conference on April 8.

The NRC concluded that Entergy failed to assure that component cooling water flow rates through containment fan coolers met the plant's technical specification requirement of 1325 gallons per minute. The containment fan coolers would help to reduce containment temperature and pressure in the event of a loss-of-coolant or main steam line break accident. Also, the NRC found that Entergy failed to take prompt corrective action to resolve discrepancies between measured containment fan cooling flows and technical specification requirements following system tests in August 1996 when the problem with the cooling water flow was identified.

In a letter to Entergy, NRC Regional Administrator Ellis Merschoff said, "The NRC acknowledges Entergy's position that the actual safety significance of the violations is low. However, we note that such a conclusion was reached only after extensive engineering analysis to justify reduced CFC flows and to show that peak containment pressure would not have been exceeded in the event of an accident."

Mr. Merschoff also pointed out in the letter that Entergy missed an opportunity to identify these problems in October 1995 when containment fan cooling flow balance testing was conducted. As a result, the plant operated out of compliance with its technical specifications for containment fan cooling flow rates for 10 months.

Entergy has conducted an engineering analysis that demonstrates that containment fan cooler flows, although less than assumed in design documents and less than required by the technical specifications, were always adequate to maintain containment peak pressure within design values. The company submitted revisions to the technical specifications for containment fan coolers on April 11. NRC is reviewing the revisions.

The violations are considered a Severity Level III problem on the NRC's four-level scale, with Severity Level I being the most serious. Entergy has 30 days to respond in writing to the NRC's Notice of Violation. The response must document specific actions taken to prevent recurrence of the violations. During this time the company may pay the fine or file a protest.