

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
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NRC TO HOLD CONFERENCE WITH WESTINGHOUSE TO DISCUSS APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT SOUTH CAROLINA FACILITY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet with officials of Westinghouse Electric Corporation Wednesday for a predecisional enforcement conference on apparent violations of NRC regulations at the company's Commercial Nuclear Fuel Division facility in Columbia, South Carolina. The facility makes fuel rods for commercial nuclear power plants.

The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. in Room T-08A1 of the NRC's Two White Flint North Building, 11545 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland. It is open to observation by the public.

The seven apparent violations to be discussed involve controls to prevent an inadvertent criticality, or nuclear chain reaction, at the facility. They were identified as a result of an NRC criticality safety inspection on August 25 to 29. The inspection was conducted to review Westinghouse's root cause analysis and implementation of corrective actions following a June 23 loss of volume control for a hopper that holds uranium powder before it is processed to make ceramic fuel pellets. The inspection also reviewed Westinghouse's actions associated with an August 25 loss of volume control for moisture dropout tanks connected with the fuel manufacturing process.

The apparent violations include inadequate investigations of the June 23 and August 25 events, including failure to identify root causes and take timely corrective actions; failure to conduct adequate criticality safety evaluations for the hopper and moisture dropout tanks; failure to verify that installed safety controls match design documents; failure to update criticality safety evaluations to ensure that all assumptions, including credible upset conditions, are justified, documented and independently reviewed; failure to control and maintain criticality safety records; failure to make required timely notifications to the NRC operations center in connection with the June 23 and August 25 events; and failure to develop nuclear criticality safety procedures to implement NRC regulations and license conditions.

The decision to hold an enforcement conference does not mean the NRC has

determined that 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 an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a fine, will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later date.

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