

**U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NEWS ANNOUNCEMENT III-98-18
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**NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$330,000 FINE AGAINST COMMONWEALTH EDISON CO.
FOR TESTING VIOLATIONS AT QUAD CITIES NUCLEAR POWER STATION**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$330,000 fine against Commonwealth Edison Co. for violations of NRC requirements for the testing of the reactor vessel and piping systems at the Quad Cities Nuclear Power Station in June of last year. The two-unit plant is located at Cordova, Illinois.

The company was cited for performing a pressure test of the Unit 2 reactor vessel and piping on June 22 of last year after the reactor had started up, rather than prior to startup. This test is required by the NRC to be performed before the reactor startup to detect any leakage from the reactor vessel and associated piping.

The plant staff also failed to adequately perform required monitoring of the reactor vessel and piping as part of the test. Similar monitoring violations were identified for earlier tests at both of the Quad Cities units.

The plant staff misinterpreted "startup" as referring to the startup of the turbine rather than startup of the reactor. The test was performed with the reactor at 12 percent thermal power, but before the turbine was started to produce electricity. In previous instances, however, the plant staff had properly performed the test prior to reactor startup.

A. Bill Beach, NRC Regional Administrator, stated, in notifying the utility of the fine: "The performance of the Unit 2 reactor coolant pressure boundary leakage test with the reactor at power demonstrated a significant lack of safety focus and a lack of knowledge and understanding of the bases for the test and applicable regulatory requirements."

He also noted that the monitoring of the reactor vessel and piping for possible leakage during the pressure test was completed in one-third the time needed in previous tests. The plant staff, however, did not recognize the shorter time as an indication that the monitoring was inadequate.

Beach added, "These additional violations indicated a potentially broad lack of understanding on the part of the Quad Cities staff for the importance of adhering to the [pressure vessel and piping testing] requirements essential to the safe operation of Quad Cities Station."

Commonwealth Edison has until April 13 to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the utility may request a hearing.

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