

U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC, COMMONWEALTH OFFICIALS TO DISCUSS APPARENT
VIOLATIONS AT DRESDEN STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet March 18 with representatives of Commonwealth Edison Company for a predecisional enforcement conference on apparent procedural violations at the Dresden Nuclear Power Station near Morris, Illinois.

The meeting will start at 1:00 p.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room of the NRC Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois. It is open to public observation. NRC officials will be available at its conclusion to answer questions from the news media and other interested observers.

The discussion will focus on Commonwealth Edison's apparent failure to revise containment venting procedures promptly when notified, both by the utility's own staff at its LaSalle station and by NRC inspectors, about safety concerns regarding these procedures.

Commonwealth Edison vented the Dresden Unit 3 reactor containment in March of last year while the plant was still operating, thus placing the plant in a condition which had not been reviewed for potential safety consequences if certain types of accidents occurred. Specifically, these procedures for venting containment bypassed the plant's pressure suppression functions which might be needed in a severe accident.

During plant operations the air in the reactor containment is replaced with nitrogen, an inert gas. The venting procedure is used to remove the nitrogen, replacing it with air to permit personnel access. The containment is the structure surrounding the reactor which is designed to prevent the release of radioactive materials to the environment in the unlikely event of an accident.

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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