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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST NORTHERN STATES POWER
FOR EQUIPMENT TESTING VIOLATIONS AT PRAIRIE ISLAND PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$50,000 fine against Northern States Power Company for violations of NRC requirements in the testing of equipment at the Prairie Island Nuclear Power Station. The two-unit plant is located at Red Wing, Minnesota.

An NRC inspection in April through June found inadequacies in the testing of the auxiliary feedwater system at the plant. This system is a backup source of cooling water for the steam generators at the plant and would be needed under certain accident conditions.

The NRC inspectors determined that testing procedures would permit an auxiliary feedwater pump to be considered operable even if it did not meet its minimum design requirements. The utility staff had never compared the testing criteria, which met industry standards, with the actual minimum system design requirements for the pump.

A second violation found by the inspectors involved the plant staff's failure to correct the auxiliary feedwater system design documents when discrepancies in system flow requirements were found in 1992.

The safety significance of the violations was low, because the auxiliary feedwater system always met the minimum design requirements.

The plant staff had found a similar problem in 1991 with the testing criteria for another plant safety system and that problem was corrected.

"The engineering staff did not take prompt correct action [at that time] to identify that this problem also existed in the auxiliary feedwater system testing program," said NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach in notifying the utility of the fine.

"If the plant staff had implemented broader corrective action, it is likely this [auxiliary feedwater] violation would not have occurred," he added.

Northern States Power has until November 17 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.