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NRC Proposes \$145,000 Civil Penalty for Violations at Vogtle Nuclear Plant

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff is proposing a \$145,000 civil penalty against Southern Nuclear Operating Co., for violations at the company's Vogtle nuclear power plant involving plant employees who did not complete required rounds to check equipment and plant conditions, but provided inaccurate documentation indicating that they had done so.

The Vogtle plant is located near Waynesboro, Ga., about 26 miles southeast of Augusta. The violations, identified during an NRC inspection, occurred from August to October 2016. An NRC investigation, completed in August 2017, found that on multiple occasions during the three-month period, at least 13 system operators failed to complete their rounds as required by plant procedures, but entered data into an electronic log indicating they had completed equipment status checks and area inspections.

The NRC does not license system operators, yet they provide an important function. The letter from the NRC to the company states, "Outside rounds are conducted for a variety of reasons, including the early identification, trending, and correction of degraded, abnormal, or undesirable plant conditions. In this case, however, this vital function was intentionally precluded by the deliberate misconduct."

Based on the NRC review, there were no actual safety consequences and the agency is unaware of any equipment issues or conditions missed during the time the rounds were not completed.

Southern Nuclear has taken a number of corrective actions, including procedure revisions, additional training and oversight, and disciplinary action for the individuals involved.

The company has 30 days to either pay the fine or protest.