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AEC REGULATORY STAFF REQUESTS DATA
ON PIPE BREAKS IN NUCLEAR PLANTS

The Atomic Energy Commission's Regulatory Staff is asking all utilities that operate nuclear power plants or have applied for operating licenses to assess the effects on essential auxiliary systems of a major break of the largest main steam or feedwater line. These lines carry steam from inside the reactor containment building to the main turbine in the turbine building, and hot feedwater back from the turbine condenser. The utility assessments will be evaluated by the AEC's Regulatory Staff.

The probability of a steam-line rupture is low. Nonetheless it will have to be considered in the AEC's safety evaluation.

The review of the pipe break problem has been under way for several weeks. It was started after the Advisory Committee on Reactor Safeguards received a letter raising questions about the location of pipes in the two-unit Prairie Island plant in Minnesota.

The Regulatory Staff has reviewed the Northern States Power Company application to operate Prairie Island, and on the basis of data available it has concluded that design changes will be required at Prairie Island.

Based on the new information--to be submitted by utilities as soon as possible--the Staff will determine what corrective action, if any, is necessary in each case. The changes could include such steps as relocating piping, providing venting of compartments, the addition of piping restraints, and, in some cases, structural strengthening.

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