



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
REGION III
799 ROOSEVELT ROAD
GLEN ELLYN, ILLINOIS 60137

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Docket No. 50-266
Docket No. 50-301

Wisconsin Electric Power Company
ATTN: Mr. Sol Burstein
Executive Vice President
Power Plants
231 West Michigan
Milwaukee, WI 53201

Gentlemen:

This Information Notice is provided as an early notification of a possibly significant matter. It is expected that recipients will review the information for possible applicability to their facilities. No specific action or response is requested at this time. If further NRC evaluations so indicate, an IE Circular, Bulletin, or NRR Generic Letter will be issued to recommend or request specific licensee actions. If you have questions regarding the matter, please contact the Director of the appropriate NRC Regional Office.

Sincerely,

James G. Keppeler
James G. Keppeler
Director

Enclosure: IE Information
Notice No. 79-26

cc w/encl:
Mr. G. A. Reed, Plant
Manager
Central Files
Director, NRR/DPM
Director, NRR/DOR
C. M. Trammell, ORB/NRR
PDR
Local PDR
NSIC
TIC
Sandra A. Bast, Lakeshore
Citizens for Safe Energy

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UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

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BREACH OF CONTAINMENT INTEGRITY

Description of Circumstances:

On September 14, 1979, the Consumers Power Company (CPC) notified the NRC of discovery at the Palisades Nuclear Generating Plant of a valve misalignment that had resulted in containment integrity being breached for an indeterminate length of time.

While preparing to perform a Type "C" leak test between two manual valves in a 3" bypass line around the main 48" containment purge valve, plant personnel discovered that both of these manual isolation valves were locked in the open position. These valves should have been locked closed. Investigation by the licensee indicated that the valves may have been improperly positioned since April, 1978, when an efficiency test of the bypass line filters was performed. The plant has operated at power for the major portion of that time period.

The valve misalignment had no actual impact on the public health. However, in the event of a design basis accident wherein fuel damage and release of primary coolant inside the containment are postulated, the open valves would provide a significant path for a radioactive release from the containment.

The initial design purpose for the bypass system was to provide a long term hydrogen control capability for the containment atmosphere following a design basis accident.^{1/} It was intended that after approximately 30 days following an accident, when containment pressure and activity levels dropped sufficiently to permit venting, this system would be manually valved to vent the containment atmosphere, through high efficiency and charcoal filters, to the exhaust stack. Thus the components in the bypass line beyond the two manual isolation valves were not designed for the severe service they would be exposed to with the valves open during the initial pressure surge of the design basis accident, and significant uncontrolled release would result. High radiation in the vicinity of the bypass line would also make immediate closing of the manual isolation valves, even if identified as the source of leakage, an extremely hazardous operation.

The principal cause for this event was inadequacy of the procedures addressing proper use and positioning of these valves. The master containment isolation valve line-up checklist, which is per-

^{1/} Current NRC requirements call for hydrogen buildup. Palisades has recom-

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