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UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
REGION I  
631 PARK AVENUE  
KING OF PRUSSIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19406

Docket No. 50-271

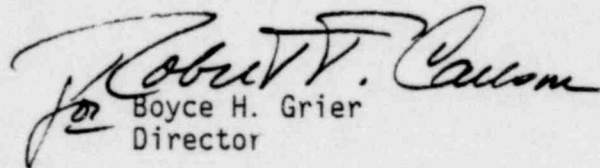
NOV 05 1979

Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation  
ATTN: Mr. Robert H. Groce  
Licensing Engineer  
20 Turnpike Road  
Westborough, Massachusetts 01581

Gentlemen:

This Information Notice is provided as an early notification of a possible 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 any questions regarding the matter, please contact this office.

Sincerely,

  
for Boyce H. Grier  
Director

Enclosures:

1. IE Information Notice No. 79-26
2. List of IE Information Notices Issued in the Last Six Months

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cc w/encls:

W. F. Conway, Plant Superintendent  
Ms. J. Abbey, Technical Secretary

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ENCLOSURE 1

SSINS: 6870  
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UNITED STATES  
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTION AND ENFORCEMENT  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20555

IE Information Notice No. 79-26  
Date: November 5, 1979  
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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. 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 occur. High radiation in the vicinity of the bypass line would also occur. The isolation valves, even if identified as a hazardous operation.

The principal cause for this event was improper use and positioning of these valves. A valve line-up checklist, which is performed

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1/ Current NRC requirements call for the control hydrogen buildup. Palisades has

DUPLICATE DOCUMENT

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