



UNITED STATES
NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION

REGION IV
811 KRYAN PLAZA DRIVE, SUITE 400
ARLINGTON, TEXAS 76011-8064

FEB 18 1992

Docket No. 50-445
License No. NPF-87
EA 91-189

TU Electric
ATTN: W. J. Cahill, Jr.
Executive Vice President, Nuclear
Skyway Tower
400 North Olive Street, L.B. 81
Dallas, Texas 75201

Gentlemen:

SUBJECT: NOTICE OF VIOLATION & PROPOSED IMPOSITION OF CIVIL PENALTY - \$25,000
(NRC INSPECTION REPORT NOS. 50-445/91-62 & 50-446/91-62)

This is in reference to NRC's October 30 - December 19, 1991, inspection at TU Electric's Comanche Peak Steam Electric Station (CPSES), which was documented in a report issued on January 3, 1992. On January 17, 1992, you and other TU Electric representatives attended an enforcement conference in NRC's Arlington, Texas office to discuss matters related to this inspection. The enforcement conference was held to discuss violations of system alignment procedures and Technical Specifications that occurred during a CPSES, Unit 1 startup in early December 1991.

The violations described in NRC's inspection report and discussed at the enforcement conference involved failures to ensure the proper alignment of the residual heat removal (RHR) system and the turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater (AFW) pump prior to placing the plant in hot standby (Mode 3). An additional violation, which was discussed briefly at the enforcement conference, involved a failure to properly document the entry into a Technical Specification action statement when the turbine-driven auxiliary feedwater pump was taken out of service.

In NRC's view, the more significant of the violations is the violation of plant procedures that resulted in the misalignment of valves in the RHR system, a system which is part of the plant's Emergency Core Cooling System and could be called upon to pump water into the reactor cooling system in the event of a plant emergency.

On December 4, 1991, the CPSES plant entered the hot standby mode (Mode 3) with two valves in the RHR system mispositioned. The valves, crosstie valves between the two trains of the RHR system, are required by system operating procedures to be open in Mode 3 to permit either RHR pump to inject water into all four reactor coolant loops in the event of a loss-of-coolant accident (LOCA). This condition went undetected by numerous licensed and senior licensed operators for some 51 hours (four shifts) until an Instrument & Control engineer who was using a plant computer to review system configurations noticed the discrepancy.

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With these valves closed, this system could not function as designed under all accident scenarios. The plant's accident analyses assume that the RHR cross-tie valves are open. The safety significance of the valve misalignment was reduced given the condition of the plant (operations at power had not begun). In the NRC's view, the significance of this condition rests on the fact that procedures designed to ensure the proper alignment of a safety system were not followed, rather than just on its effect on plant safety systems. Factors that contributed to making this event significant include: 1) a required surveillance test which would have revealed the misalignment was not performed due to a flaw in the surveillance program; 2) inattention to detail and poor communications during a plant startup played a role in the misalignment of an important safety system; and 3) the misalignment was not recognized by control room personnel responsible for checking system control boards periodically during their shifts. As discussed above, four shift changes occurred between the time the plant entered Mode 3 and the time the misalignment was discovered.

For these reasons, NRC considers the procedural violation and the factors that contributed to this misalignment a matter of significant regulatory concern. Therefore, in accordance with the "General Statement of Policy and Procedure for NRC Enforcement Actions," (Enforcement Policy) 10 CFR Part 2, Appendix C (1991), the violation associated with this event (Violation I) has been classified at Severity Level III.

NRC considers TU Electric's corrective actions for this violation to have been prompt and extensive. Immediate corrective actions included restoring the system to its proper alignment, performing complete alignment checks on RHR and other systems to ensure that no other valves were mispositioned, completing modifications to the RHR system alignment procedures to minimize a recurrence of this event, and covering lessons learned from this event in meetings with plant staff. In addition to these immediate actions, TU Electric said at the enforcement conference that it had developed a supplemental emergency core cooling system control switch alignment checklist to be performed periodically, that it had corrected the surveillance program to ensure Technical Specification-required surveillances are performed prior to mode changes, that it would review and stress management's expectations regarding control board awareness and log entries, and that it would consider establishing a "quiet period" prior to plant mode changes during which plant status and paperwork would be reviewed.

Nonetheless, to emphasize the importance of positive communications, attention to detail, and awareness during plant evolutions to ensure that all safety systems are properly aligned as required by system operating procedures, I have been authorized, after consultation with the Director, Office of Enforcement, and the Deputy Executive Director for Nuclear Reactor Regulation, Regional Operations and Research, to issue the enclosed Notice of Violation and Proposed Imposition of Civil Penalty (Notice) in the amount of \$25,000 for the Severity Level III violation described above and in the Notice.

The base value of a civil penalty for a Severity Level III violation is \$50,000. The escalation and mitigation factors in the Enforcement Policy were considered and resulted in a net decrease of \$25,000. The reduction in the base value was made because, as discussed above, TU Electric took prompt and extensive corrective actions. Although NRC considered a reduction of the penalty based on the misalignment having been discovered by CPSES personnel, no reduction was made because the misalignment went undetected for approximately 51 hours, during which four shift changes occurred. The other adjustment factors in the Enforcement Policy were considered and no further adjustment to the base civil penalty was considered appropriate.

Two additional violations are included in the Notice but are not being assessed a civil penalty. As indicated above, these include the failure to have the turbine-driven AFW pump properly aligned upon entry into Mode 3 and the failure to properly document, for tracking purposes, the entry into a Technical Specification-required action statement when the same pump was taken out of service. These violations are also indicative of inattention to detail during a plant startup and in the case of Violation II.A, a weakness in licensed operator understanding of the AFW Technical Specification, but are not considered as significant from a safety and regulatory perspective as Violation I and are being classified at Severity Level IV.

You are required to respond to this letter and should follow the instructions specified in the enclosed Notice when preparing your response. In your response, you should document the specific actions taken and any additional actions you plan to prevent recurrence. Specifically, your response should include the actions you are taking to assure positive communications between operators, awareness of equipment status, and awareness of mode change requirements. After reviewing your response to this Notice, including your proposed corrective actions and the results of future inspections, the NRC will determine whether further NRC enforcement action is necessary to ensure compliance with NRC regulatory requirements.

In accordance with 10 CFR 2.790 of the NRC's "Rules of Practice," a copy of this letter and its enclosure will be placed in the NRC Public Document Room.

The responses directed by this letter and the enclosed Notice are not subject to the clearance procedures of the Office of Management and Budget as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, Pub. L. No. 96-511.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Martin
Regional Administrator

Enclosure:
Notice of Violation and Proposed
Imposition of Civil Penalty

TU Electric

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cc w/encl:
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TU Electric

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