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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 1996
RIV-9623

NRC STAFF TO HOLD OPEN PREDECISIONAL
ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE APRIL 1 WITH COOPER NUCLEAR STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will hold a predecisional enforcement conference with officials of the Cooper Nuclear Station, operated by the Nebraska Public Power District, on Monday, April 1, at 9 a.m. at NRC Region IV headquarters in Arlington, Texas.

The conference will be open to public observation, but participation will be limited to NRC and Cooper officials. The Cooper plant is near Brownsville, Neb.

Scheduled to be discussed at the conference are apparent violations disclosed through NRC inspections conducted in February. Three apparent violations were identified and are being considered for escalated enforcement. In the first, inspectors identified that a blowout panel in the main steam tunnel was modified in 1985 such that the panels would not function to relieve pressure at design values. No required analysis was performed, and as a result the plant was not maintained in a configuration consistent with the Updated Final Safety Analysis Report and associated licensed design basis for about 10 years.

The second and third violations involve design configuration control of the plant emergency diesel generators. In one case, an unauthorized modification to the solenoid valves, which control the muffler bypass valves, rendered one diesel generator inoperable under certain conditions for about 20 days. In the other, diesel control power circuitry was found to be inadequately isolated from the effects of a potential control room fire. This could have prevented the diesel generator from performing its intended function of providing emergency power necessary for the plant to achieve and maintain hot shutdown in the event of a control room fire.

The decision to hold an enforcement conference does not mean the NRC has determined that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss the apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a civil penalty, will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later time.

The conference will be open to the public as part of a trial program to open some of these sessions for public observation.

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