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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$20,000 FINE AGAINST GENERAL ELECTRIC
COMPANY AT WILMINGTON, NC, FUEL PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$20,000 civil penalty against the General Electric Company for alleged violations of NRC requirements at its Wilmington, North Carolina, commercial nuclear fuel fabrication facility.

The NRC told the company, in a letter and Notice of Violation dated March 13, 1992, that the civil penalty was being proposed because of alleged violations of NRC requirements at the plant associated with an event on May 29, 1991. On that date, the company reported to the NRC an inadvertent transfer of approximately 320 pounds of uranium to a waste treatment tank with an unfavorable geometry. The NRC said the significance of this event was the potential for a nuclear criticality accident because the safety limits of uranium concentrations in unfavorable geometry had been exceeded and a system of criticality safety controls had deteriorated to the point where process controls and mass limit control were no longer effective.

The NRC dispatched a team of inspectors to the plant the same day and conducted a special Incident Investigation Team (IIT) inspection which began two days later.

NRC officials told GE in the letter that the agency recognized that the company had initiated extensive corrective actions to preclude recurrence of this type of event, including an increase in management oversight of operational activities, enhancement of technical support, enhanced training and sensitization of personnel, physical plant changes, procedural changes and verification of key operational controls.

The company has 30 days in which to reply to the proposed fine or to protest its imposition, in whole or in part.

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