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FOR IMMEDIATE

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NRC STAFF PROPOSES TO FINE THE VERMONT YANKEE NUCLEAR POWER  
CORPORATION  
\$50,000 FOR ALLEGED VIOLATION OF NRC REQUIREMENTS

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corporation of Brattleboro, Vermont, for a violation of NRC requirements identified during an inspection of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant in Vernon, Vt., between February and April. The staff has proposed a \$50,000 fine.

The violation involves the licensee's alleged failure to promptly identify and correct a significant condition adverse to quality that existed at the facility. The condition involved the potential for pressure locking of motor-operated valves required for the activation of the core spray system, which could be called upon to cool the reactor core in the unlikely event of a major loss of coolant accident.

In a letter to the licensee, NRC Region I Administrator Thomas T. Martin, said the company had opportunities to identify and correct the condition in March 1994, when it determined that the valves were susceptible to pressure locking during a loss of coolant accident. Although the company issued memoranda on March 7, 1994, and March 11, 1994, stating that an analysis should be performed on the operability of the valves, it did not do so until the NRC identified the omission during the February 1995 inspection, Mr. Martin said.

"The NRC also is concerned that your failure to identify promptly and correct adverse conditions at your facility has been a recurring problem at Vermont Yankee," Mr. Martin said. In January 1994, NRC staff issued a \$187,500 civil penalty to the licensee for several violations, including failure to identify and correct problems associated with refueling activities in a timely manner. In its latest Systematic Assessment of Licensee Performance, issued in February 1994, NRC staff said "continued management attention is needed to resolve concerns over the effectiveness of the Vermont Yankee corrective action processes and resolution of longstanding deficiencies."

During an enforcement conference with NRC staff on May 26, the licensee acknowledged that it did not address the pressure locking concern appropriately and provided insufficient management oversight to the matter. The company has subsequently addressed the problem by drilling holes inside the valves, creating an internal pathway to relieve any possible buildup of pressure that could prevent them from operating properly.

Vermont Yankee has 30 days to admit or deny the alleged violation and pay the proposed fine or request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn. The state of Vermont has been informed of this enforcement action.

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