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NRC PROPOSES \$100,000 CIVIL PENALTY FOR APPARENT VIOLATIONS  
OF FIRE PROTECTION PROGRAM AT RIVER BEND STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has informed Entergy Operations Inc., that it proposes to fine the utility \$100,000 for apparent fire protection program violations at the River Bend Station near St. Francisville, Louisiana.

NRC has decided to take this enforcement action based on information (1) reported in December 1993 by Gulf States Utilities, the former River Bend licensee; (2) gathered by NRC inspectors during an inspection December 13-17, 1993, and January 10-11, 1994; and (3) developed during an enforcement conference with Entergy officials held in the NRC regional office on February 11.

The River Bend operating license requires that fire protection features be provided for systems and components important to achieving a safe shutdown of the reactor. NRC has determined that, since the plant was licensed in 1985, River Bend has been in violation of this requirement in these five instances:

- Associated circuits that shared common enclosures with some emergency diesel generator controls and with some standby service water pump controls were not provided with overcurrent protection, which could have made these components unavailable in the event of a main control room fire.
- Circuits for some standby service water cooling tower fans were not isolated from the main control room — with the result that a main control room fire could have prevented these fans from being started if needed.
- One emergency diesel generator could have been unavailable after a main control room fire because fuses protecting the control circuits were improperly sized and would not have protected the cables from short-circuit damage.

- Another emergency diesel generator could have been prevented from operating properly because some control cables in one plant area run through a conduit without fire protection features.
- A main control room fire could have led to flooding of the plant's main steam lines and to damage of valves necessary to achieve and maintain hot shutdown because certain electrical circuits lacked fire protection.

In his letter informing Entergy Operations of the enforcement action, NRC Regional Administrator L. Joe Callan acknowledged that operator action in most cases could have overcome these fire-protection deficiencies and achieved a reactor shutdown. He also agreed with Entergy that the probability of these accidents is low.

"Nonetheless," wrote Mr. Callan, "the NRC considers these violations, in the aggregate, to be a significant regulatory concern because these fire protection design deficiencies have existed since the initial operation of [River Bend] and because the very purpose of the involved fire protection requirements is to ensure the availability of essential equipment without operator intervention." He said NRC's concern is heightened because the former River Bend licensee, Gulf States, had several prior opportunities to discover and correct these problems.

Mr. Callan said Entergy has promptly resolved each of the deficiencies and brought those situations into compliance. Long-term actions planned by the utility include better training for the plant fire protection staff and less reliance on contractor support.

NRC doubled the \$50,000 base civil penalty for a problem of this kind because of poor performance in the fire protection area in the last two years and because of the length of time the deficiencies existed.