

No. 92-192
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Wednesday, December 30, 1992)

NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$62,500 FINE FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS
AT MILLSTONE NUCLEAR POWER STATION, UNIT 3

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has cited Northeast Nuclear Energy Company for two alleged violations of NRC regulations, based on equipment problems in its Millstone Nuclear Power Station, Unit 3, in Waterford, CT. The staff has proposed a \$62,500 fine.

On July 4, 1992, looking into an equipment problem, the utility discovered additional problems with the configuration and testing of the auxiliary building (ventilation) filter system (ABFS). The company eventually concluded that the system had been inoperable for periods of time, and had not been adequately tested since the plant first started to operate in 1986, and reported that to the NRC on September 17, 1992.

The plant's technical specifications require that when the unit is operating, two independent trains of the auxiliary building (ventilation) filter system (ABFS) must both be operable, or the plant must be shutdown within a specified amount of time. The ABFS is designed to control the release of radioactive material from the auxiliary building, in the event of an accident, by directing these releases through a filter. It works in conjunction with the supplemental leak collection and release system (SLCRS), which is designed to filter radioactivity that could leak into structures surrounding the primary containment following an accident, reducing any release to the environment. Together the ABFS and SLCRS would draw and maintain a vacuum inside the secondary containment enclosures, as required by plant technical specifications. Between July 11 and August 24, 1992, the two independent trains of the ABFS were not operable because the filter exhaust fan dampers were set in a manner that would prevent SLCRS and ABFS from drawing the required vacuum within the specified time.

In addition, NRC regulations require that licensees take steps to ensure that testing is done in a way that demonstrates systems will function as intended. NRC inspectors found that since initial plant start-up in January 1986, surveillance tests

were performed on the ABFS and SLCRS on a routine basis, but the system tests were not representative of the way they would function in a real accident.

In a letter to the utility, Thomas T. Martin, Regional Administrator, NRC Region I, said, "The NRC recognizes the complexity of the ABFS/SLCRS relationship. Nonetheless, the NRC is concerned that since initial startup, your staff was not fully aware of the ABFS design basis and operating parameters, and their adverse impact on the SLCRS operation, even though the fact that the ABFS exhaust fans would not operate properly in the automatic mode was identified prior to initial plant startup and documented as an outstanding design deficiency."

The normal fine for such a violation is \$50,000. It was increased by 25 percent to \$62,500 because the licensee failed to resolve the issue during earlier opportunities to identify and correct the problems.

Northeast Nuclear Energy Company has 30 days to either pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that part or all of it be withdrawn, giving its reasons for any such request. The utility also has 30 days to admit or deny the alleged violations, to give reasons for them if admitted, to describe the actions it has taken or plans to take to prevent their happening in the future, and to give the date by which it expects to be in full compliance with NRC requirements.

The State of Connecticut has been informed of this enforcement action.

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