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NRC STAFF PROPOSES TO FINE PUBLIC SERVICE ELECTRIC & GAS COMPANY
\$80,000 FOR ALLEGED VIOLATION AT ITS SALEM NUCLEAR GENERATING
STATION

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has cited Public Service Electric & Gas Company, (PSE&G) for an alleged violation of NRC requirements at its Salem Nuclear Generating Station, in Lower Alloways Creek, N.J. The staff has proposed a fine of \$80,000.

The NRC staff proposed the fine after determining that two safety review group (SRG) engineers at the plant suffered harassment and intimidation after raising safety concerns on December 3, 1992. The two engineers questioned whether the commercial grade air supply pressure setpoint regulators, which control service water flow to the containment fan cooling units, were seismically qualified, were classified properly in an information system as safety-related, and were configured properly.

Based on investigation, the NRC staff concluded that the then-General Manager-Salem Operations (GMO) and the then-Operations Manager (OM), engaged in a number of discrete acts, that created a hostile work environment for two SRG engineers who attempted to file an incident report on a safety concern in accordance with station procedures. After the OM and GM-SO met privately for approximately 15 minutes, the two SRG engineers were called into the meeting. During the meeting, the GM-SO became frustrated as he was unable to convince the SRG engineers to modify, amend, or otherwise revise their proposed incident report. When matters reached an impasse, one of the engineers indicated that he (the engineer) could document the matter as a safety concern. The GM-SO took this statement as a threat, became more angry, ordered the two SRG engineers to get out of his office, and threatened to have site security officers remove them. The next day, the GMO signed a letter prepared by the OM requesting that the two safety engineers be removed from any further involvement with the Salem station.

The NRC staff has determined that the actions are a violation of the requirement that prohibits licensees from

discriminating against employees who raise safety concerns.

"A hostile work environment is not conducive to the raising of safety concerns by individuals, and can potentially have an adverse impact on the safe operation of the facilities," Region I Administrator Thomas T. Martin said in a letter written to PSE&G officials. "As such, a hostile work environment at a licensee facility, cannot and will not be tolerated."

Mr. Martin also expressed concern that senior management at PSE&G did not resolve the issue "promptly and effectively" after becoming aware of it in late December 1992 and early January 1993.

"The former Vice President and Chief Nuclear Officer initially failed to recognize the significance of the issues and to monitor resolution and the former Vice President, Nuclear Operations, exercised poor judgment by abstaining from any involvement in the resolution of the issues," Mr. Martin said.

The NRC staff has classified the alleged violation as Severity Level II, because senior plant management was involved in creating a hostile work environment. The normal fine for a Severity Level II violation is \$80,000.

The NRC staff also recognized that PSE&G identified the alleged violation and has taken a number of steps to correct it and prevent recurrence, including removing both the former GMO and the former OM from involvement with the Salem station.

PSE&G has 30 days to pay the proposed fine or to request in writing that part of it or all of it be withdrawn. The company also has 30 days to admit or deny the alleged violations and to describe the actions it has taken or plans to take to prevent recurrence.

The states of Delaware and New Jersey have been informed of this enforcement action.

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