

United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs
Washington, DC 20555
Phone 301-415-8200 Fax 301-415-2234
Internet:opa@nrc.gov

No. 96-48

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Wednesday, March 6, 1996)

**NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE AGAINST DUKE POWER COMPANY
FOR ALLEGED VIOLATION OF REQUIREMENTS AT OCONEE NUCLEAR PLANT**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$50,000 civil penalty against Duke Power Company for alleged violation of NRC safety requirements at the Oconee nuclear power plant near Seneca, South Carolina.

NRC officials said the fine was being proposed because the company failed to provide adequate procedures to control fuel assembly movement in the spent fuel pool, resulting in an irradiated fuel assembly being left withdrawn from its storage location in the pool during a period from December 14, 1995 through January 8, 1996. The NRC said that, although the assembly remained shielded under water, it could have become uncovered during certain accident conditions requiring the use of water from the spent fuel pool.

In a letter to the company dated March 5, 1996, Stewart D. Ebnetter, administrator of the NRC's Region II office in Atlanta, said the agency is concerned that the control of fuel assembly movements continues to be a problem at Oconee. He said the NRC issued two procedural violations involving fuel movement at Oconee in August of 1994, one of which resulted in a \$15,000 civil penalty and that the agency is concerned with repetitive violations in this area.

Ebnetter said credit was warranted for the company's corrective actions which included an in-depth evaluation of the event, procedural upgrades, management changes and improvements in training.

The company has 30 days from receipt of the Notice of Violation to either pay the civil penalty or to protest its imposition.

####