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Region III Office of Public Affairs
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NRC TO HOLD PREDECISIONAL ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE
WITH COMMONWEALTH EDISON ON APPARENT VIOLATIONS AT BYRON PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet June 20 with representatives of Commonwealth Edison Company for a predecisional enforcement conference on apparent violations associated with the reactor containment floor drains at the Byron Nuclear Power Station. The facility is near Byron, Illinois.

The conference will start at 10 a.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room of the NRC Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois. It is open to public observation.

The discussion will focus on ComEd's failure to keep material from clogging the drain system in the containment and for failing to identify that the associated leakage detection system was apparently inoperable for over five months, exceeding the seven day limit in the plant's license. The containment drain system is designed with flow detection instrumentation which provides early identification of reactor cooling water leakage.

The reactor containment is the large reinforced concrete structure which surrounds the reactor and reactor cooling system components.

On March 15, while Unit 2 was shut down for a maintenance outage, the utility found standing water in the containment building floor trench. Debris was found in the drain system. Assessment by NRC staff determined that the debris was most likely from the previous October Unit 2 outage, thereby rendering the containment leak detection system inoperable from that date. ComEd also provided inaccurate information in its report to the NRC on the clogging of the system.

NRC inspectors also noted that the grates which covered the drains differed from those which were described in the plant's original design and in some cases there were no grates over drains. In an apparent violation, the utility had failed to perform a safety evaluation to determine the acceptability of using a different design grate or no grate at all.

The decision to hold an enforcement conference does not mean the NRC has determined that a violation has occurred or that

enforcement action will be taken. Rather, the purpose is to discuss apparent violations, their causes and safety significance; to provide the licensee an opportunity to point out any errors that may have been made in the NRC inspection report; and to enable the company to outline its proposed corrective actions.

No decision on the apparent violations or any contemplated enforcement action, such as a fine, will be made at this conference. Those decisions will be made by senior NRC officials at a later date.

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