

U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Office of Public Affairs, Region II
61 Forsyth Street, Suite 23T85
Atlanta, GA 30303

No: II-97-82
Contact: Ken Clark or Roger Hannah
1997)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
(Monday, November 24,

NRC STAFF SCHEDULES PREDECISIONAL ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE
TO DISCUSS ST. LUCIE NUCLEAR PLANT REGULATORY CONCERNS

DECEMBER 3 MEETING WITH FP&L IN ATLANTA IS OPEN TO PUBLIC

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has scheduled a predecisional enforcement conference with Florida Power & Light Company on December 3 in Atlanta to discuss regulatory concerns at the St. Lucie nuclear power plant, located on Hutchinson Island near Ft. Pierce, Florida, involving deficiencies in the testing and operation of Unit 2 containment cooling fans.

NRC officials said that, during testing on October 8, FP&L employees discovered that one of four Unit 2 containment cooling fans was running in the reverse direction when set at slow speed. A company investigation concluded that electrical leads were apparently misconnected when the fan motor was replaced last May 9. Post-maintenance testing failed to identify the reverse rotation while in slow speed operation, and an additional test on May 19 also failed to identify the problem.

St. Lucie's containment cooling system includes two trains with two fans each. The fans are powered by a two-speed motor to allow for fast and slow operation. The system is normally operated with three fans in service at high speed with the fourth in standby. During certain conditions, the three operating fans shift to slow speed, and the idle fan starts in slow speed.

NRC officials said that, while no safety problem occurred, during certain postulated circumstances involving a loss of normal electrical power and failure of an emergency diesel generator to start, one train of cooling fans could be lost and the fan circulating in the wrong direction would negate the effects of the remaining train's second fan, complicating containment cooling efforts.

The NRC inspection report which outlines the apparent violations commends an Assistant Nuclear Plant Supervisor who, although the fans were tested over a four-week period in fast speed, expressed concern that they were not being tested in their emergency configuration, leading to identification and correction of the problem.

The conference will begin December 3 at 10:00 a.m. in the NRC's Atlanta regional office, located on the 24th floor of the Atlanta Federal Center, 61 Forsyth Street, S.W. The meeting is between the NRC and FP&L but is open to the public for observation, and NRC officials will be available at its conclusion to answer questions from interested observers.

The decision to hold a predecisional enforcement conference does not mean that a determination has been made that a violation has occurred or that enforcement action will be taken. The Purpose of the conference 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 civil penalty, will be made at the conference. Those decisions will be made later by senior NRC officials.

#

EDITORS: Recorded information on all upcoming NRC predecisional enforcement conferences may be obtained by calling 1-800-952-9674. A copy of the inspection report upon which this predecisional enforcement conference is based is available by request at the above mail, E-mail, telephone or fax address.