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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$110,000 FINE AGAINST ILLINOIS POWER CO.
FOR CIRCUIT BREAKER MAINTENANCE AT CLINTON NUCLEAR PLANT

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a \$110,000 fine against Illinois Power Company for failing to correct maintenance problems with safety-related circuit breakers at the Clinton Nuclear Power Station. The plant is located near Clinton, Illinois.

The violation was identified in an NRC inspection from January through March of this year.

The company was cited for failing to take adequate corrective action to ensure the circuit breakers were adequately maintained and to prevent the use of incorrect lubricants and cleaning agents on the circuit breakers. Using incorrect lubricants and cleaning materials resulted in hardened grease which subsequently caused the circuit breakers to fail to operate.

NRC Regional Administrator A. Bill Beach, in notifying the utility of the fine, said: "The violation represents a significant program breakdown in that assurance was lost that safety-related electrical breakers would function if required."

He added that the utility had taken "inadequate corrective action for a longstanding equipment problem and the serious degradation of safety-related circuit breakers." The company had been previously cited by the NRC for failing to adequately maintain circuit breakers in 1995.

As a result of this year's NRC inspection findings, the utility has undertaken extensive inspections and refurbishing of the safety-related circuit breakers at the plant. It has also improved its maintenance procedures and taken steps to make sure that correct lubricants are used on the circuit breakers.

Illinois Power Co. has until August 31 to pay the fine or to protest it. If the fine is protested and subsequently imposed by the NRC staff, the utility may request a hearing.

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