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NRC STAFF PROPOSES \$50,000 FINE FOR VIOLATIONS AT ARKANSAS NUCLEAR ONE

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff has proposed a civil penalty of \$50,000 against Entergy Operations, Inc., operator of Arkansas Nuclear One, a nuclear power plant near Russellville, Arkansas, for violation of NRC fire safety and quality assurance requirements.

The violations, discussed during a predecisional enforcement conference held March 28, were identified during inspections conducted October 22-29 and November 21-25 last year after a fire inside the Unit 1 plant containment structure on October 17. The fire broke out in oil-soaked insulation around a steam generator. The oil was leaking from a cracked weld on a line in the reactor coolant pump lubrication system. NRC inspectors found that required oil leak collection systems were not adequate and cited two examples of "inadequate response to plant conditions which indicated the potential for a fire."

In a letter to Entergy, NRC Regional Administrator Ellis Merschoff said, "The October 17, 1996, fire was quickly extinguished and did not affect the safety of the plant. Nonetheless, the NRC finds the fire protection inadequacies, coupled with the plant staff's inadequate response to indications of a fire, i.e., oil-soaked insulation which was reported to be smoking excessively during plant heat-up, unacceptable performance."

Mr. Merschoff acknowledged that Entergy has taken or planned a number of corrective actions, including better training and procedures to heighten sensitivity to smoke, oil leaks, lube oil collection system requirements and the potential for reduced auto-ignition temperatures of oil-soaked insulation, and plant modifications and administrative measures to address the various inadequacies in reactor coolant pump lube oil collection systems.

The NRC has categorized the violations as Severity Level III. The agency's enforcement system uses four Severity Levels, with Level I being the most serious. Entergy has 30 days to respond in writing to the NRC's Notice of Violation. The response must document specific actions taken to prevent recurrence of the violations. During this time the company may pay the fine or file a protest.