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No. 98-92

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
(Wednesday, June 17, 1998)

**NRC ORDER TO THE VIRGINIA ELECTRIC CONFIRMS FIRE BARRIER  
CORRECTIVE ACTIONS AT NORTH ANNA 1 AND 2**

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission has issued a confirmatory order to Virginia Electric and Power Company confirming its commitment to complete Thermo-Lag fire barrier corrective actions at its North Anna nuclear power plant Units 1 and 2 by the end of its next refueling outage scheduled to begin in September. The plants are located about 40 miles northwest of Richmond, Virginia .

In a letter to Virginia Electric and Power Co. officials, Sam Collins, Director of the NRC's Office of Nuclear Reactor Regulation, said the order was issued because of concern "that some licensees may not be making adequate progress toward resolving the plant-specific issues, and that some implementation schedules may either be too tenuous or too protracted." The North Anna plants are among them.

Thermo-Lag is a fire barrier material manufactured and supplied by Thermal Science, Inc., of St. Louis, Missouri, and has been used to provide fire resistance to wiring and equipment at nuclear plants. The NRC has been concerned that Thermo-Lag 330-1 fire barrier material installed by some of its licensees may not provide the intended level of fire protection and that licensees thus may not be meeting regulatory requirements. Between 1992 and 1994, the NRC staff issued letters to all nuclear utilities asking licensees to submit plans and schedules for resolving the issue. All licensees with Thermo-Lag fire barriers have implemented around-the-clock "fire watches," using workers to patrol vital plant areas on a regular basis to watch for signs of fire until corrective actions have been completed.

In his letter to Virginia Electric and Power Co. officials, Collins noted that NRC has been meeting with licensees to review their progress in completing implementation of their fire barrier programs, but have been concerned about slow progress on resolution of the issue at certain plants.

Virginia Electric and Power Co. was one of the licensees with which NRC has periodically held meetings. At these meetings, the NRC reviewed Virginia Electric and Power Co.'s schedule for Thermo-Lag corrective actions and concluded they are

reasonable. The company formally agreed May 22 to the terms of the confirmatory order.

About 20 other plants are expected to receive similar orders in the coming months.

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