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NRC TO HOLD PREDECISIONAL ENFORCEMENT CONFERENCE
WITH CENTERIOR ON AN APPARENT VIOLATION AT PERRY

The Nuclear Regulatory Commission staff will meet October 7 with representatives of Centerior Service Company for a predecisional enforcement conference on an apparent violation at the Perry Nuclear Power Station. The plant is located seven miles northeast of Painesville, Ohio.

The meeting will start at 12:30 p.m. in the Third Floor Conference Room of the NRC Region III Office, 801 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois. It is open to public observation. NRC officials will be available at its conclusion to answer questions from the news media and other interested observers.

The discussion will focus on Centerior's failure to evaluate the safety implications when it changed procedures affecting the emergency closed cooling system. This system supplies cooling water to equipment that would be used during certain accidents.

NRC's concerns relate to an analysis done by Centerior in 1993, when it concluded that--because of leakage through valves from one system into another--this cooling water system could only be relied on for 30 minutes, rather than the seven days specified in plant design documents. The utility made this change in plant procedures and licensing records.

During a special design inspection in February and March, NRC questioned the utility's analysis. Inspectors also noted that the procedure changes resulted in new safety questions that needed to be formally reviewed. In an apparent violation of NRC requirements, Centerior apparently failed to identify these unreviewed safety questions during its own safety evaluation of the procedural changes.

As a result of the NRC inspection, the utility retested the system, measured the valve leakage, and determined that there would be more than a seven-day supply of water in the system's tank. Accordingly, Centerior has rescinded the changes to Perry's licensing documents and procedures.

At the conference, Centerior will also provide additional information regarding its corrective actions for some apparent violations that were discussed at a predecisional enforcement conference on April 18.

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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